



# 2007 Annual Report

## EUROPE AND THE FORMER SOVIET BLOC

## THE TEMPTATION TO BAN

2006 was a very worrying year for press freedom in Europe, not just in countries whose governments naturally caused anxiety but also in European Union (EU) member-states. Moves to censor or self-censor appeared, sometimes violently, concerning religious topics. The range of subjects that can be covered freely also shrank, with harming the reputation of the state and denying or mentioning historical events drawing threats or legal action. The banning in three countries, including Turkey, of the January-February 2007 issue of the magazine *Historia* about religious fundamentalism is the most recent example.

Western Europe, and also Turkey, were frequently tempted to ban some topics from public discussion. The row over a Danish paper's September 2005 publication of cartoons of the Prophet Mohamed and the reprinting of them in solidarity in several countries spread across Europe and beyond. Supporters of freedom of expression faced those who said religious feelings should be respected. French newspapers *France Soir* and *Charlie Hebdo*, which both reprinted all 12 cartoons, were legally challenged by the French Muslim Council.

French philosopher Robert Redeker was threatened in southern France for a very critical article he wrote about Islam. A leading opera house in Germany cancelled performances of Mozart's opera *Idomeneo* for fear of Muslim reaction. Other concerns were a new law in France banning denial of the 1915 Armenian genocide and Turkey's frequent use of article 301 of its criminal code to prosecute journalists and intellectuals mentioning the genocide.

The situation was grim in Russia, where campaigning reporter Anna Politkovskaya became the third journalist to be murdered during the year on 7 October, after Yevgeny Gerasimenko and Ilya Zimin, Moscow correspondent for the nationwide NTV network. Twenty-one journalists have now been killed since President Vladimir Putin came to power in March 2000. New media takeovers by firms close to the Kremlin and lack of broadcast news diversity showed Putin's determination to increase his control of the media.

Five journalists were murdered in the former Soviet bloc countries in 2006, including leading investigative journalist Anna Politkovskaya, showing the problems this region has in shaking off its authoritarian past.

Greater press freedom since the 2004 "Orange Revolution" in Ukraine was offset in 2006 by physical attacks on journalists and failure to satisfactorily resolve the murder of journalist Georgy Gongadze. The campaign for the November presidential election in Tajikistan saw websites shut down and very unequal media access for candidates.

Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko was reelected with 80% of the vote in March in grim conditions, having virtually eradicated the independent media since coming to power in 1994 and returned the country to the era of clandestine publications. Violence and physical attacks on journalists and hounding of the opposition press also made it a dark year in Azerbaijan.

Things did not improve either in Central Asia. The regime in Uzbekistan maintained pressure on independent local and foreign media. The Kazakh government stepped up legal harassment of opposition media and a young French journalist was murdered.

In Turkmenistan, which has the world's worst press freedom record along with North Korea, the local correspondent for *Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty* died in prison while serving a six-year sentence for working with foreign media. Two other journalists were given similar sentences for the same reason on 25 August and have not been heard of since. The death of "President-for-Life" Saparmurad Nyazov in December raised hopes for liberalisation of one of the world's most oppressive regimes.

Elsa Vidal  
Head of Europe desk

## AZERBAIJAN

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Area: 86,600 sq.km.

Population: 8,410,000.

Language: Azeri.

Head of state: Ilham Aliev.

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The regime frequently uses violence and threats against the media and the country came near the bottom of the 2006 worldwide press freedom index.

A court in Yasamal rejected a complaint on 27 January 2006 filed by journalist Sarvan Rizvanov (of the Turan news agency) against police officer Col. Chingiz Mamedov for hitting him with an iron bar during an authorised demonstration on 9 November 2005. The local prosecutor refused to take action and ignored medical reports and photos taken of the attack.

Fikret Huseynli, of the main opposition daily *Azadlig*, was kidnapped and badly beaten in Baku on 5 March 2006. He was on his way to the Badamdar district for his work when he was knocked unconscious from behind. When he came to he was in a car with three men who took him to the outskirts of the capital and threw him out. They broke his fingers, stabbed him in the neck and left him for dead at the roadside. He was later found and taken to hospital.

The editor of the opposition daily *Bizim Yol*, Bahaddin Khaziev, was kidnapped from his car on the night of 18 May by five men who put a sack over his head, beat him and ordered him to stop writing articles. They then left him for dead near a lake about 20 km outside the capital after driving over his legs. He was found unconscious the next morning and taken to hospital in critical condition. He had reported on caviar smuggling and on corruption by a top security ministry official. Local and foreign pressure obliged the authorities to open an enquiry into the attack but many people demonstrating in support of Khaziev were arrested.

Journalist and writer Sakit Zahidov, of *Azadlig*, was arrested on 23 June and charged with possessing a large quantity of drugs with intent to sell it. A support committee of prominent people, independent journalists, politicians and human rights activists called for his release. Zahidov said 10 grammes of heroin police claimed they found on him had been

planted by them. Medical tests showed he was not a drug-user. He began a 10-day hunger-strike on 25 July to protest against his detention. He was given a three-year prison sentence on 4 October, even though the prosecution failed to prove he had bought, consumed and intended to sell the heroin.

Journalists and opponents of President Ilham Aliev stepped up their campaign against the regime in October after the authorities said they were expelling the opposition papers *Azadlig* and *Bizim Yol*, the main independent TV station *ANS*, the *Turan* news agency and the Azerbaijan Popular Front party from their offices in central Baku. Delegates of the *Azadlig* ("Freedom") opposition coalition began a hunger-strike on 30 October and were joined on 9 November by representatives of the independent media in protest against what they called "the government's unofficial war on the free press."

But the regime went ahead and evicted *Azadlig* and *Turan* on 25 November from their offices to new premises on the outskirts of the city, some of which were already occupied. Equipment and archives were badly damaged during the forced move. The state broadcasting council announced the same day it was cancelling the operating permit of *ANS TV* and the station went off the air a few hours later. The council also said it would ban the transmission in the country of the *BBC*, *Voice of America* and *Radio Liberty / Radio Free Europe* from 1 January 2007.

The killer of editor Elmar Huseynov, of the newspaper *Monitor*, who was shot dead in March 2005, has still not been identified. The public prosecutor on 8 August 2006 accused former economic development minister Farkhad Aliev, whom Huseynov had often strongly criticised, of being involved in the murder. Aliev strongly denied this.

## BELARUS



Area: 207,600 sq.km.  
Population: 9,755,000.  
Languages: Belarusian, Russian.  
Head of state: Alexander Lukashenko.

President Alexander Lukashenko's reelection with more than 80% of the vote in very tense conditions on 19 March 2006 showed his firm intent to resist the wind of change in neighbouring Ukraine. The deplorable press freedom situation in Belarus did not improve and Lukashenko has managed in his three terms of office to silence nearly all opposition and independent media.

Many foreign journalists were deported or refused entry visas in spring 2006, including Laure Mandeville, of the French daily *Le Figaro*, who was officially told she had written "lies" about the situation in Belarus.

Repression focused on media outlets giving a voice to the opposition or simply mentioning its existence. At least nine journalists were arrested and beaten on 2 March by plainclothes police while reporting on the arrest of opposition presidential candidate Alexander Kazulin. A week later, all 250,000 copies of a special edition of the independent paper *Narodnaya Volia* about Kazulin were seized. Distribution of three independent papers containing manifestos of opposition candidates was prevented by their Russian printing firm which broke off its contracts with them. Police on 17 March seized 200,000 copies of the opposition paper *Tovarishch* (which had been closed for several months) because they contained the manifesto of presidential candidate Alexander Milinkevich.

The Belarusian Association of Journalists (BAJ) said the state-run TV station *ONT* gave 89% of its airtime to election candidates between 21 February and 4 March. Two opposition candidates - Milinkevich and Sergei Gaidukevich - were not mentioned at all, while a third, Kazulin, got just 0.4% of the airtime.

The free media has almost disappeared or been forced underground as in Soviet times. Printing and distribution of newspapers is done by monopoly state firms and the state post office *Belpochta*, which has a monopoly on handling subscription copies, said it would stop distributing in 2007 four national papers (*Narodnaya Volia*, *Nasha Niva*, *Tovarishch*, *Svobodnie Novosti Plus*) and more than a dozen regional ones.

Systematic legal hounding by the authorities of media outlets that stray from the official line enables them to be silenced through bankrupting them. Suspension of the cultural magazine *Arche* was confirmed on 8 November on grounds that its September issue had contravened the magazine's licence terms banning it from mentioning politics. The cover photo showed police breaking up an opposition protest in March and an article detailed a 1995 crackdown on opposition MPs who were protesting a referendum imposed by Lukashenko to make Russian one of the country's official languages.

The suspension threatened the magazine's existence. The post office told *Arche* that if its next issue did not appear before 18 December, it would stop distributing the magazine. Journalist Valentin Akudovich said the magazine "would never recover - the regime has banned it from newsstands, then from bookshops and now from simply appearing."

Administrative reasons were used as a threat to suspend the country's oldest independent weekly, *Nasha Niva*, on the eve of its centenary. The information ministry said the November issue failed to mention its editorial address, thus violating article 26 of the press law. The weekly's application for a licence to send out subscription copies was refused in April. It had not been distributed by the post office since January and had managed to publish thanks to private donations and to printing fewer copies (only 2,500).

The investigation of the July 2000 disappearance of cameraman Dmitri Zavadski was closed again on 31 March 2006, after being reopened in April 2005. The prosecutor-general's office cited an article of the criminal code allowing closure in case of "failure in a search for a disappeared person." Zavadski's body has not been found since he vanished at Minsk airport.

## BELARUS

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The government has a monopoly of telecommunications and does not hesitate to block access to opposition websites if it feels the need, especially at election time. Independent online publications are

also often hacked. In March 2006, for example, several websites critical of President Alexandre Lukashenko mysteriously disappeared from the Internet for several days.

## BULGARIA

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*Area: 110,910 sq.km.  
Population: 7,965,000.  
Language: Bulgarian.  
Head of state: Georgi Parvanov.*

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Reforms were introduced in preparation for the country's entry into the European Union on 1 January 2007. Meanwhile organised crime and corruption are priority problems that undermine Bulgarian society and affect the work of journalists.

Organised crime is a huge problem in Bulgaria, with corruption and money-laundering so pervasive that they affect the whole society and hamper the work of journalists. A bomb went off in front of the Sofia home of Vasil Ivanov, of the *Nova TV* station, early on 6 April, destroying the apartment but causing no casualties. Ivanov's mother was in at the time but miraculously survived.

Investigators suspected the blast was connected with Ivanov's work. He had received regular death threats during the previous year because of his reporting on enquiries into organised crime and had to have bodyguards. At the end of 2005, he had reported on a solicitor who certified stolen vehicle sales without checking the relevant papers. Ivanov had obtained proof by "purchasing" vehicles belonging to the former prosecutor-general and even President Georgy Parvanov.

Access to public information generally improved in 2006. After declassification of a first spate of Communist-era material (halted in 2002 at NATO's request), the government said it was opening up nearly 250,000 files as their legal confidentiality expired. Interior minister Rumen Petkov said on 20 May that several journalists, including

*Nova TV's* political commentator, Georgy Koritarov, and former presenter Kevork Kevorkian, had been recruited by the communist secret police in the 1970s.

Koritarov admitted he had worked with the secret police, especially in fact-finding missions to Yugoslavia, China, Romania and Albania. But Tocho Tochev (editor of the daily *Trud*) and freelance journalist Angelina Petrova, who were also accused of collaboration, protested and won a letter of apology from the ministry, as did two other journalists (Ivo Inzhev and Ivan Garelov) wrongly suspected of belonging to the secret police.

These sensational revelations revived the heated debate on the subject. The prime minister favoured destroyed the archives but on 6 December parliament voted to extensively open up the files and even post online the names of politicians, judges, diplomats and journalists who had been agents or had worked with the espionage and counter-espionage services until July 1991, when these bodies were disbanded. The names of department heads up to July 1990 will also be released. But none of the exposed people will be prosecuted.

## DENMARK

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Area: 43,090 sq.km.

Population: 5,430,000.

Language: Danish.

Head of government: Anders Fogh Rasmussen.

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Publication of cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed in 2005 continued to stir impassioned debate in Denmark in 2006. Three journalists on the *Berlingske Tidende* were also prosecuted for "undermining state security," which threatened to create an unfortunate precedent in a country with one of the world's best records for press freedom.

Publication by the daily *Jyllands-Posten* of 12 cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed on 30 September 2005 sparked a huge crisis between Denmark and Muslim countries and quickly spread to other European states, some of whose media outlets reprinted them in solidarity. *Jyllands-Posten* editor Carsten Juste formally apologised to Muslims on 30 January 2006 on the paper's behalf, but this was not enough to avoid a bomb scare and evacuation of the building shared by the paper and the Danish news agency *Ritzau*.

Prime minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen, who had originally defended freedom of expression, yielded to heavy pressure and implicitly deplored publication of the cartoons. But Flemming Rose, cultural editor of *Jyllands-Posten*, defended on 19 February his decision to publish the cartoons in the first place as a legitimate journalistic subject and said he opposed the media giving special treatment to Islam. He was later sent on indefinite leave by the paper.

Denmark's excellent reputation for press freedom was threatened when two journalists of the daily *Berlingske Tidende* were prosecuted in April 2006

for publishing extracts in February and March 2004 from a Danish intelligence service report saying there was no serious evidence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. The supposed existence of them was used by the Danish government to justify its participation in the US occupation of Iraq. The two journalists, Michael Bjerre and Jesper Larsen, were charged with "publishing material illegally obtained by a third party." Frank Grevil, the military intelligence officer who passed on the report to them, was given a four-month prison sentence in 2005.

The charges against the two journalists were increased in April 2006 and the paper's editor, Niels Lunde, was also charged. All three went on trial in November for "undermining state security" and faced up to two years in prison. They were cleared on 4 December to the relief of the country's media. The case emphasises how secrecy of journalistic sources is crucial to press freedom in Europe.

## FRANCE

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Area: 551,500 sq.km.  
Population: 60,496,000.  
Language: French.  
Head of state: Jacques Chirac.

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**Respect for religious beliefs and private life and for the right not to reveal journalistic sources were at the centre of the press freedom debate during 2006.**

The managing editor of the daily *France Soir*, Jacques Lefranc, was dismissed by the paper's French-Egyptian owner, Raymond Lakah, for reprinting 12 cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed on 1 February that were first published by a Danish newspaper. Five days later, on 6 February, a bomb threat was made to the paper.

The day before, a fire extinguisher had been placed outside the offices of the satirical weekly *Charlie Hebdo*, hinting at an imminent attack. A legal effort by Muslim organisations, including the French Muslim Council (CFCM), to obtain seizure of the issue of the weekly devoted entirely to the cartoons, failed on 7 February. The CFCM began legal action on 10 February against French papers that had reprinted the cartoons. An article in the daily *Le Figaro* by philosophy teacher Robert Redeker headed "What should the free world do about Islamist intimidation?" got the issue of the paper banned in Egypt and Tunisia. Redeker was given police protection after getting death threats and had to stop his teaching activities.

So-called "revisionist" laws also substituted ideology for debate, as shown by the National Assembly's passage of a Socialist proposal banning denial of the 1915 Armenian massacres on pain of five years in prison and a fine of €45,000 euros, thus helping to build an official version of history and shutting down debate, which is against the principle of freedom of expression.

As in the previous year, 2006 saw numerous prosecutions of journalists in a bid to make them reveal their sources. Justice minister Pascal Clément pro-

mised however to include privacy of sources in the revised 1881 press law. This did not stop the formal investigation of six journalists for "possessing legally confidential material" (two journalists of *L'Equipe*), "violating professional secrecy" (*Midi Libre*) and "violating confidentiality" (in the Clearstream corruption scandal). A Paris court's dismissal of charges against journalist Claude Ardid on 14 November was a welcome contrast. The court said a journalist's only job was to help inform the public, including in ongoing legal cases, and could not be interfered with except where freedom of expression was abused but not because of violations of secrecy that have helped to inform the public."

The aim of restricting journalists is also behind the protection of the private life of public figures. The dismissal of Alain Genestar as editor of *Paris-Match* in June 2006 aroused strong protests. He said he had been removed because he printed a cover photo on 25 August 2005 of conservative leader Nicolas Sarkozy's wife Cécilia in New York with her boyfriend. The magazine's owners, Lagardère, a friend of Nicolas Sarkozy, claimed he had been dismissed because of a "professional" dispute.

The situation remained worrying in New Caledonia, where the media was frequently accused in local conflicts. Things at the broadcaster *RFO* returned to normal in November after eight months of intermittent disputes. But the printing press of the weekly paper *Les Infos* was shut down in late August and early September, and that of the daily *Les Nouvelles calédoniennes* briefly in November. Journalists were frequently barred from press conferences or prevented from filming.

## GERMANY

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Area: 357,030 sq.km.

Population: 82,689,000.

Language: German.

Head of government: Angela Merkel.

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**Spying on the media by the intelligence services and police to discover journalistic sources was a hot topic in 2006 and several journalists were prosecuted for "complicity in disclosing state secrets." The new freedom of information law came into effect but implementation was not satisfactory.**

Freelance journalist Bruno Schirra and Johannes von Dohnanyi, foreign editor of the Swiss weekly *SonntagsBlick*, were charged on 15 March 2006 with "complicity in disclosing state secrets" along with Wolfram Weimer, editor of the political magazine *Cicero*. The Potsdam prosecutor said Schirra included in an April 2005 *Cicero* article part of a confidential police report on Al-Qaeda that von Dohnanyi had passed on to him. In September that year, police violated the right to secrecy of journalistic sources (article 53 of the code of criminal procedure) by searching the magazine's offices and Schirra's house.

Weimer agreed to pay a fine of €1,000 in exchange for the dropping of charges, but refused to admit his guilt and said he had wanted to speed up the legal process and get a decision from the Constitutional Court, which on 22 November 2006 began hearing his appeal against the police search as a violation of press freedom. A verdict is expected in 2007.

The Potsdam regional court overruled a decision against Schirra and von Dohnanyi in July 2006. It argued that the state secret had already been disclosed when the information was passed to Schirra. It also said the content of the confidential report was known to a French journalist months before the article appeared in *Cicero*.

Two opposition parties in the German parliament, the FDP and Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, are pushing for a new law to protect journalists from prosecution for "complicity in disclosing state secrets."

The daily *Süddeutsche Zeitung* revealed on 12 May that a former senior judge had said in a confidential report to a parliamentary commission that the German intelligence service BND had spied on journalists between 1990 and late 2005 to discover which of its officials were leaking material to the media. Major magazines *Stern* and *Der Spiegel* then found out they had been spied on. The government was forced to react

on 15 May by banning the BND from spying on journalists. The report, which was eventually published on 26 May, said that as well as tapping journalists' phones, the BND had paid some journalists to spy on their colleagues.

Another phone-tapping case was revealed in December by *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, which said conversations between journalists of *Stern* and of the publicly-run TV station ZDF with the lawyer of Khaled el-Masri, a German citizen kidnapped in 2003 and held in Afghanistan until May 2004 had been spied on. The public prosecutor had ordered the phone-tapping in January 2006 to obtain information about the kidnapers of Masri, whose lawyer, Manfred Gnjidic, appealed against the phone-tapping to the constitutional court.

*Der Tagesspiegel* cartoonist Klaus Stuttmann received death threats after one of his cartoons appeared in the paper on 17 February. With the caption "Why the army must be present," it showed four Iranian football players with explosives strapped to them standing next to armed German soldiers. It was an ironic comment on the debate about use of the army during the soccer World Cup.

A day after the 17 September elections in the state of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, two journalists were attacked by supporters of the extreme right-wing NPD party while taking pictures of and filming party members. A journalist and photographer were attacked and beaten while covering a neo-nazi-meeting on 4 November

A new freedom of information law came into effect in January 2006. The law officially guarantees access to such data but includes many exceptions for reasons of supposed public and national security and requires that disclosure of information about a company must be approved by the company itself. Those seeking information must also pay for it.

## ITALY

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*Area: 301,340 sq.km.*

*Population: 58,093,000.*

*Language: Italian.*

*Head of government: Romano Prodi.*

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Press freedom and independence were a major issue in the April 2006 parliamentary election campaign, during which outgoing prime minister Silvio Berlusconi was sanctioned at least three times for overshooting his allotted media-time. As in many European countries, protecting journalistic sources became an issue when police searched the premises of daily papers.

The 9-10 April parliamentary elections were won by the centre-left coalition of Romano Prodi, who became prime minister, replacing Silvio Berlusconi, who was rebuked at least three times for violating electoral law. On 7 April, Berlusconi unexpectedly appeared on the TV station *Rete 4* and was interviewed for 20 minutes, despite the intervention of the state broadcasting regulator. The station belongs to the Berlusconi-family-owned *Mediaset* group, which was fined three times, including €250,000 on one occasion, for bias in favour of its owner's centre-right coalition. The regulator accused *Rete 4* of inviting Berlusconi to appear on the programme "Liberi Tutti" without any opponent and only with journalists who supported him.

The offices of the daily *Repubblica* in Rome and Milan, and those of the daily *Piccolo* in Trieste, were searched by tax police on 11 August as part of an investigation into the 2003 CIA kidnapping of former Imam Abu Omar. The homes of two journalists - Cristina Zagaria and Claudio Ern  - were also searched and they were accused of "violating legal confidentiality" and "possessing secret documents" for quoting a military intelligence official about the case in their respective papers. The tendency to prosecute journalists for revealing confidential information spread throughout Europe during the year.

The supreme court on 26 October cleared journalist Mario Spezi of involvement in the 1985 murder of a Tuscan doctor and of "insults" for his investigation of a series of unexplained murders (the Monster of Florence case). Spezi, who had been arrested on 7 April and had covered the case for the daily *La Nazione*, was writing a book about the murders that challenged the police version.

The Perugia prosecutor ordered his home to be searched in November 2004 and police seized material for articles he wrote for the paper in the 1970s and in the 1980s. They also took away computer files and all material to do with his book. He spent 23 days in prison in 2006 and the judge in the case agreed to the prosecutor's request to hold him in secret for five days, treatment usually reserved for the most dangerous criminals.

Blogger Roberto Mancini was fined €13,500 on 26 May for allowing readers of his blog to post libellous comments about local journalists, a decision that clashed with European jurisprudence and could harm the country's blogosphere by making editors inclined to unduly censor visitors to their sites.

## KAZAKHSTAN



Area: 2,724,900 sq.km.  
Population: 14,825,000.  
Language: Kazakh.  
Head of state: Nursultan Nazarbayev.

The crackdown on opposition and media in the run-up to the December 2005 election that gave President Nursultan Nazarbayev a new seven-year term barely let up in 2006 and prosecutions for “defaming” him continued, along with closure of opposition papers and physical attacks on journalists. A young French journalist was also murdered in Almaty.

An opposition leader, Altynbek Sarsenbayev, and two aides were shot dead in February and the opposition media joined a protest movement calling for a thorough investigation. Editor Yergaliev Gulzhan, of *Svoboda Slova*, was given a 10-day prison sentence in March for saying President Nazarbayev and his daughter (member of parliament Darigha Nazarbayeva) were behind the murders.

Two months later, journalist Kazis Toguzbayev was prosecuted by the committee for national security for supposedly harming the president’s “dignity and reputation” (article 318 of the criminal code) in a 3 May article on website [www.kub.kz](http://www.kub.kz) headed “Mafia regime shadows the murder of Altynbek Sarsenbayev” and accusing the authorities of not investigating the murder energetically enough. His trial began on 23 November and he faces up to three years in prison and a fine of up to \$7,600. He was banned from leaving Almaty.

The regime continued to target the opposition press. Kenzhekali Aitbakiev, a sub-editor of the weekly *Ayna-Plus* (whose liquidation had been ordered in early April after being sued for libelling Nazarbayev), was attacked and beaten up by a dozen men near his home on 23 April and lay unconscious in the street for three hours before being taken to hospital for an emergency operation for a fractured skull and jaw.

*Ayna Plus* had only started up in January as a new version of the opposition newspaper *Dat*, founded in 1998 and several times forced to change its

name (*SolDat*, *Juma Times*, *Ayna-Plus*) to keep going in the face of several judicial liquidations, like other publications.

Nazarbayev decreed amendments to the press law on 5 July, setting up a fund to pay libel damages (to which all media had to belong), providing for a three-year ban on working as a journalist for those with a media-outlet ordered closed and a ban on newspapers reusing or partly changing the name of a paper shut down by the authorities. Registration with the information ministry was tightened and re-registration made compulsory whenever a media-outlet changed its editor, address or the number of copies it printed, on pain of heavy fines.

French journalist Grégoire de Bourgues, 24, was murdered at his apartment in Almaty on 2 August. He had been in the country for three months writing an advertising feature for the government. Police said he was the victim of a botched robbery by three men who broke into his apartment and killed him before getting away with about €5,000, his mobile phone and laptop computer. Police arrested two suspects in late August and said a third man was being sought.

Reporters Without Borders went to Kazakhstan in September to investigate, met government officials and investigators and managed to win access for the family’s lawyers to the case files and permission to participate in the trial. The family lodged a legal complaint in France on 8 September and Reporters Without Borders was granted interested party status by the investigating judge.

## POLAND

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Area: 312,685 sq.km.  
Population: 38,600,000.  
Language: Polish.  
Head of state: Lech Kaczynski.

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The advent of the coalition government of the Law and Justice (PiS) and Self-Defence (Samobrona) parties and the League of Polish Families (LPR) in late 2005 aggravated relations between officials and the media, except for the religious media, which were supported and favoured by the government.

The ultra-conservative TV station *Trwam* was given a scoop on 2 February 2006 about the signing of an agreement between conservatives, the extreme right and populists. Only journalists from the media group of Father Tadeusz Rydzyk were given access, sparking outrage among other journalists.

Religion was also the reason behind a €125,000 fine imposed on the TV station *Polsat* by the state broadcasting council (KRRiT) on 22 March for "harming the reputation" of broadcaster Magda Buczek and offending the feelings of listeners and viewers of her programmes on Radio Maryja and *Trwam* after a *Polsat* talk-show guest imitated her voice and called her an "old maid."

### CRITICISM NOT TOLERATED

President Lech Kaczynski and his twin brother Jaroslaw, the prime minister, did not like being criticised and the Warsaw prosecutor took action in July against Peter Kohler, of the German daily *Tageszeitung*, for writing a satirical article a month earlier about the Kaczynski brothers headed "The new Polish yokels."

The government reacted furiously and officials likened *Tageszeitung* to the pro-Nazi German press and demanded that the German government condemn the article. The Polish foreign ministry said on 4 July it would no longer speak to the paper's Warsaw correspondent, Gabrielle Lesser, who received anonymous threatening phone calls. President Kaczynski called the article "vile" and "disgusting" on 7 July.

The editor of the monthly *Sukces* removed a page from 90,000 already-printed copies of the April issue for fear of reprisals about an article there in which a journalist in dispute with the

presidential press office (over an article she wrote in February) continued to state her case.

The deteriorating general situation included influential media-outlets inciting the public to racial and religious hatred. A commentator on *Radio Maryja* (with three million listeners), Stanislaw Michalkiewicz, said in March that "the Jews humiliated Poland internationally by demanding money" for property they left behind in Poland. Xenophobic and anti-Semitic remarks increased on the station without intervention by the KRRiT.

The KRRiT was radically reformed under a December 2005 law and its members reduced from nine to five, two of whom were named by President Kaczynski, who on 6 February appointed a new chairman, Elzbieta Malgorzata Kruk. The constitutional court ruled on 23 March that the appointments were illegal and that the KRRiT was too much under government control.

Editor Andrzej Marek, of the regional weekly *Wiesci Polickie*, won a four-year battle against a three-month suspended prison sentence for libel handed down in 2002 for an article a year earlier denouncing corruption of an official in the town of Police. Marek was ordered imprisoned on 16 January 2006 but the constitutional court stayed the order and freed him two days later.

But the court refused on 30 October to invalidate article 212 of the criminal code providing for up to a year in prison for defamation. The court recognised the importance of press freedom for democracy but said an individual's dignity and reputation was more important, even though the clause contravened article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

## ROMANIA

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*Area: 238,391 sq.km.  
Population: 21,710,000.  
Language: Romanian.  
Head of state: Traian Basescu.*

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Two journalists were investigated for “disclosing legally confidential material” and a website making fun of the foreign ministry website was shut down. This was offset by the start of a wide-ranging reform of the criminal code.

2006 began badly with prosecution of two journalists for allegedly revealing legally confidential material. Sebastian Oancea and Marian Garleanu, of the dailies *Ziua* and *Romania Libera*, were accused by the defence ministry on 20 February of “possessing and disclosing” a CD of pictures of Romanian troops in Iraq and Afghanistan, probably from an army source.

They were prosecuted even though the two papers decided not to print the pictures and on 7 February sent the photos to the national intelligence service. Garleanu was arrested on 16 February and held for two days. Both journalists face up to seven years in prison each. Four other journalists - Bogdan Comaroni, Doru Dragomir, Victor Roncea and Ovidiu Ohanesian - have been summoned to appear as witnesses in the case.

A website created by two foreign desk journalists on the daily paper *Ziua* parodying the foreign ministry website was shut down in June. The ministry asked the Internet service provider CHL to stop hosting the site and CHL agreed to, even though the ministry had no right to seek its closure. The provider also handed over information about the journalists, violating the law protecting personal data.

Encouraging progress was made in reforming the criminal code and parliament approved on 6 June the decriminalisation of defamation and insults, for which people can no longer be jailed. Justice minister Monica Macovei has begun a thorough reform of the code.

## RUSSIA

Area: 17,075,400 sq.km.  
Population: 143,200,000.  
Language: Russian.  
Head of state: Vladimir Putin.



Several journalists were murdered during the year, notably Anna Politkovskaya, as a result of spreading social violence and failure to punish the killers of journalists. More takeovers of media outlets continue to seriously threaten news diversity and freedom of expression.

Three journalists were murdered in 2006, bringing to 21 the number killed doing their job since President Vladimir Putin came to power in March 2000.

The killing of Anna Politkovskaya at her Moscow home on 7 October sparked international protests from governments, the European Union and NGOs. The courageous and world-renowned journalist worked for the paper *Novaya Gazeta*, and for many years had campaigned against the war in Chechnya and corruption and shrinking freedoms throughout the Russian Federation. Prosecutor-general Yuri Chaika personally took charge of the investigation of her death. Many leads were being examined amid general worry that the enquiry would come to nothing, like most killings of journalists in Russia.

The body of Yevgeny Gerasimenko, of the regional weekly *Saratovski Rasklad*, was found in his apartment by his mother on 26 July, with his head in a plastic bag and his body bearing marks of torture. Investigators ruled out a link with his job on 30 October and a Saratov court jailed a homeless man, Sergei Finogeyev, for 18 years for the murder. Gerasimenko had been looking into corruption among local businesspeople, so it is hoped that a link with his job was only excluded after thorough investigation. Ilia Zimin, of the station *NTV*, was found dead in his Moscow apartment on 26 February. He had been looking into hygiene in the capital's luxury restaurants, equipped with a hidden camera. The Moscow prosecutor has not yet established a link between this and his death.

These killings provoked new public demonstrations calling for an end to violence against journalists and respect for press freedom. Protests by hundreds of people on 21 June and 15 December

included slogans such as "Censorship today, prison tomorrow!" and "Down with one-party TV!" Public readings of the names of all journalists killed in Russia since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 were also held.

### TAKEOVERS SHRINK NEWS DIVERSITY

The media subsidiary of the natural gas conglomerate Gazprom, which is very close to the Kremlin (its main shareholder), has gained control of many media outlets, including the daily paper *Kommersant*, one of the last bastions of the independent media, which was bought on 31 August by mining and metals magnate Alisher Usmanov, who also owns a Gazprom subsidiary. The firm said on 21 November it would buy the country's biggest daily paper, *Komsomolskaya Pravda* (2.1 million readers) in early 1997.

Pressure on the media in the provinces, where political and economic power is most narrowly concentrated, means that journalists' room for manoeuvre is even less than in Moscow. As well as the murder of Gerasimenko, at least five other provincial journalists were physically attacked and one (Elina Ersenoyeva) vanished in Chechnya, which remained a "black hole" for news, even though Putin said the rebellious province was "completely back under control of the Russian constitution."

The supreme court overturned on 9 November the acquittal of three men for the July 2004 shooting murder of US journalist Paul Klebnikov, editor of the Russian edition of *Forbes* magazine. The three - Fails Sadretidinov, Musa Vakhayev and Kazbek Dukuzov - had been cleared at the country's first assises trial on 10 January. They will now be retried by a Moscow court, which may open the case to the public for the first time.

## SPAIN



*Area: 505,990 sq.km.  
Population: 43,064,000.  
Language: Spanish.  
Head of government: José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero.*

The Catalan regional assembly's passing of a broadcasting law that includes threats to press freedom is a call for vigilance and a warning that membership of the European Union does not guarantee protection against the temptation to obstruct journalists. The threats to the media by the ETA still oblige several of them to work under protection.

The Catalan assembly passed a law on 29 December 2005 giving the regional broadcasting authority (CAC) undue quasi-legal powers (similar to those in Navarre and Andalusia) to regulate media content. It provides for heavy fines (between €90,000 and €300,000) and cancellation of operating licences (and thus closure of the media-outlet). Media must also comply with "the principle of truthful and verified news" and must not "obstruct government surveillance activity." These provisions contravene the much more liberal European Union press freedom laws.

Two major press freedom cases advanced in 2006. The seven-year prison sentence imposed in 2005 on Tayssir Allouni, of the pan-Arab satellite TV network *Al-Jazeera*, was confirmed by an appeal court on 1 June. He had been convicted on 26 September 2005 of "collaboration" with Al-Qaeda as part of a trial of 24 people accused of involvement in terrorist activities in Spain. The prosecution mentioned an interview he had had with Osama bin Laden in October 2001 when he was *Al-Jazeera's* bureau chief in Kabul. He also pointed to the many contacts he had with Islamic fundamentalists. Allouni was transferred to house arrest for humanitarian reasons on 3 October 2006 and was able to return to his family in Granada. *Al-*

*Jazeera* announced on 14 July it was opening a bureau in Spain.

The supreme court on 5 December ordered the reopening of the enquiry into the death of Spanish cameraman José Couso in Baghdad's Palestine Hotel after US army shelling on 8 April 2003. The enquiry had been formally closed on 10 March but the supreme court said Spanish courts were competent to handle the case, which could affect relations between the US and Spain. This means Spain could seek extradition of three US soldiers responsible for the shelling.

The state prosecutor said on 14 December that legal action against the Basque-language newspaper *Egunkaria* by a judge was unjustified because he had not proved the paper was an arm of the pro-independence ETA. The paper faces another legal actions.

Journalists who mention Basque terrorism and the ETA - put in the list of predators of press freedom by Reporters Without Borders - find it difficult to do their job. Despite the permanent ceasefire declared by the ETA on 22 March, several dozen journalists still have to work with protection because of ETA threats.

## SWITZERLAND

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*Area: 41,284 sq.km.*

*Population: 7,100,000.*

*Languages: German, French, Italian.*

*Head of state: Micheline Calmy-Rey.*

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Government prosecution of journalists on the newspaper *SonntagsBlick* caused surprise, despite precedents, and highlighted the need to decriminalise press offences in a country where there is genuine press freedom.

The newspaper *SonntagsBlick* reported on 8 January that the CIA had secret prisons in Europe and reprinted a fax from the Egyptian foreign ministry on the subject. The Swiss government was in the dock and chose to challenge the paper in court. Criminal and military investigations were launched to find the journalists' sources and *SonntagsBlick* editor Christoph Grenacher and two of his reporters, Sandro Brotz and Beat Jos, face up to five years in prison for refusing to reveal them.

Article 293 of the criminal code punishing "publication of secret official discussions" contradicts article 10 of the European Human Rights Convention and the European Court of Human Rights ruled against Switzerland on 25 April.

Among precedents for the government's willingness to prosecute journalists was the conviction of Martin Stoll for writing in the weekly *Sonntags-*

*Zeitung* in 1997 about Carlo Jagmetti, Swiss ambassador to the US.

Another was the case of Viktor Damman, legal columnist of the daily *Blick*, who was investigating a burglary of the Fraumünster post office in Zurich in September 1997 and an official of the public prosecutor's office agreed to fax him information about people arrested during the enquiry. None of the information was published but he was prosecuted for "instigating violation of official secrets" and fined €325 because the court said the list of people arrested was secret.

However, the European Court said the information could easily have been obtained elsewhere and that the journalist was punished to dissuade him from investigating, which could prevent the media doing its job of informing people and monitoring situations. It awarded him damages of €3,244.

## TAJIKISTAN

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Area: 143,100 sq.km.

Population: 6,300,000.

Language: Tajik.

Head of state: Imamali Rahmanov.

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“No country in the world comes up to all the standards of the OSCE,” was President Emomali Rakhmonov’s retort to critical OSCE observers after he won a third term of office at elections on 6 November 2006 with 76.4% of the vote. The run-up to the election weighed on press freedom throughout the year.

OSCE observers said the election had not met democratic standards, despite a decree in September that each candidate would be given 30 minutes on national TV (the country’s main source of news) and the president’s statement on 20 October that all candidates should have equal opportunities during the campaign. In reality, the five other candidates were only allowed between five and 15 minutes air-time each.

Two journalists were briefly arrested in the southern town of Qorghan-Teppa on 18 September after investigating forced labour by students in cotton fields. They were *Radio Free Europe* correspondent Nosir Mamurzoda, who is not allowed to broadcast in the country, and a reporter of the *Avesta* news agency. They were freed after being ordered not to investigate matters that “could destabilise the country.”

A dispute between the *British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC)* and the state broadcasting com-

mission *Tajiktelecom* dragged on during the year after a new law in September 2005 required media outlets to re-register with the authorities. The *BBC* had been told on 20 December 2005 that it must file the necessary documents before 10 January 2006 even though some of them would take six months to get. On the deadline, the relay of *BBC* programmes on FM (the only way to reach much of the population, in Dushanbe and northern town Khujand) was suspended. The justice ministry eventually allowed the *BBC* office in Dushanbe to reopen on 26 June. In July, the station applied for an FM operating licence to the state broadcasting commission, which refused it on 2 August on grounds that there was no agreement between Britain and Tajikistan.

Less than a month after the presidential election, several independent news websites were illegally shut down, including that of opposition figure Dodojon Atovulloyev, *Tajikistantimes.ru*, founded in March 2003 and one of the few criticising the government.

## TURKEY

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Area: 774,820 sq.km.

Population: 71,190,000.

Language: Turkish.

Head of government: Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

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Press freedom is still restricted by article 301 of the criminal code, which is frequently used against journalists, writers and intellectuals mentioning sensitive topics such as the Armenian massacres and the Kurdish question. Negotiations for Turkish membership of the European Union have focused on the need to change this situation and prime minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan said publicly he wants dialogue about it.

At least 65 people, including many journalists and writers, have been prosecuted under article 301 of the new criminal code introduced on 1 June 2005. The article, headed "Denigration of Turkishness, the republic and state organs and institutions," provides for between six months and three years in prison for "anyone who openly denigrates the government, judicial institutions or military or police structures."

Scenes of violence accompanied the trials in 2006 of novelists Orhan Pamuk (who won the 2006 Nobel Prize for literature) and Elif Shafak, Armenian-origin journalist Hrant Dink and five columnists with the major dailies *Milliyet* and *Radikal* (Erol Katircioglu, Murat Belge, Haluk Sahin, Hasan Cemal and Smet Berkan). All were acquitted.

Turks are divided on the issue. The EU enlargement commission's report on 8 November said press freedom must improve and that "freedom of expression in line with European standards is not yet guaranteed by the present legal framework (...) Article 301 and other provisions of the Turkish penal code that restrict freedom of expression need to be brought in line with the European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR)."

The strong campaign for and against about Turkish EU membership and the award of the Nobel Prize for literature to a writer being prosecuted for his work forced the prime minister to publicly declare support for amending article 301. Several journalists prosecuted under it said they would take their cases to the European Human Rights Court.

Among them was Dink, editor of the Armenian weekly *Agos*, who was given a six-month suspended prison sentence on 7 October 2005 for writing a series of articles about "Armenian identity."

He was prosecuted again on 18 July 2006 four days after an interview with Reuters news agency about his prison sentence for "insulting Turkishness" in which he used the word "genocide" about the Turkish massacres of Armenians in 1915. He faces a new prison sentence of three years.

### WORRYING DEVELOPMENTS

Amendments to the country's anti-terrorist law that were approved by parliament on 29 June also threatened freedom of expression by allowing imprisonment for printing news about "terrorist organisations" and raised fears of unjustified prosecution of journalists who dared to mention the subject. Rüstü Demirkaya, of the pro-Kurdish news agency *Diha*, was jailed on 14 June in the eastern town of Tunceli for "collaborating with the PKK/Kongra-Gel" after a former militant reportedly accused him of giving the PKK a laptop and 10 blank CDs and telling the party about an ongoing military operation. He faces up to 12 years in prison.

Three bomb attacks on the far-left daily paper *Cumhuriyet* on 5, 10 and 11 May caused much damage but no injuries and its journalists immediately resumed work. Ilyas Aktas, of the far-left fortnightly *Devrimci Demokrasi*, was shot and seriously wounded in the southeastern town of Diyarbakir on 30 March during a demonstration to honour 14 Kurdish rebels killed by the army a few days earlier. He died on 14 April.

Police were criticised for failing to help an injured journalist from the daily *Sabah*, Aliye Cetinkaya, during a protest in the town of Konya on 10 February against publication in Europe of cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed. Demonstrators attacked her because she was not wearing a

## TURKEY

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headscarf, wore jeans and was chewing gum. She was insulted and stoned and shoes were thrown at her. Police stood by and colleagues had to take her from the scene.

But 2006 ended with the good news of the release of two journalists of the pro-Kurdish

news agency *Diha*, Evrim Dengiz and Nesrin Yazar, after nine months in prison for “undermining the unity of the state and territorial integrity.” They had been arrested while reporting on a demonstration in support of PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan, who has been in prison since 1999.

## TURKMENISTAN



*Area: 488,100 sq.km.  
Population: 4,830,000.  
Language: Turkmen.  
Head of state: Gurbanguly Berdymukhamedov.*

The regime's grip on the country and the independent media tightened further in 2006, with several journalists arrested, one killed in prison and their families hounded by the authorities. The death of President Saparmurad Nyazov on 21 December revived hopes of liberalisation in Central Asia's most repressive country.

Three journalists and human rights activists - Annakurban Amanklychev, Sapardurdy Khajiev and Ogulsapar Muradova - who helped French TV station *France 2* make a travel programme about Turkmenistan were arrested on 16 and 18 June. They were accused of plotting against 'The Turkmenbashi' (Father of All Turkmens, as Nyazov called himself) and their detention announced by the president's *Ashgabat TV* station. The eventual charges against them were "illegal possession of arms and ammunition" and before their secret trial on 25 August, their families were not allowed to visit them. One witness who saw Amanklychev at the state security ministry said she was almost unrecognisable and was being brutally interrogated round the clock.

After a hasty trial during which the defence was not allowed to speak, Amanklychev and Khajiev were sentenced to seven years in prison and Muradova to 6 years. They said they would appeal and then no more was heard of them until the death of the 58-year-old Muradova was reported on 14 September. She had been the local correspondent for *Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty*, had three children and probably died under torture in prison since her body had many bruises, traces of internal bleeding and a large open head wound. No official investigation of her death was made. All

three prisoners had reportedly been sent to Odovan Depe prison, where about 4,000 political prisoners are held.

The three journalists, who were also activists for the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights, had helped make a French TV documentary called "Turkmenistan: Welcome to Nyazovland" that was broadcast in France on 28 September. Since their conviction, their friends and family have been persecuted, lost their jobs and been constantly watched.

Amanklychev and Khajiev were not among more than 10,000 prisoners amnestied on 16 October by Nyazov on the 15th anniversary of independence including eight of the 50 people jailed for "treason" after a November 2002 bid to assassinate the president. Three journalists among the 50 - Serdar Rakhimov, Batyr Berdyev and Ovezmurad Yazmuradov, who were sentenced to 25 years each - remained in prison and are being held in an unknown place.

Nyazov ironically inaugurated a "House of Free Creativity" in Ashgabat on 17 October 2006. The 10-storey, \$17 million building shaped like an open book and shining at night is for regime journalists and, like many other public works in the country, was built by the French firm Bouygues.

## UKRAINE

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Area: 603,700 sq.km.

Population: 46,481,000.

Language: Ukrainian.

Head of state: Viktor Yushchenko.

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Political instability plagued 2006 due to tension between pro-Western President Viktor Yushchenko (elected after the 2004 "Orange Revolution") and his rival Viktor Yanukovich, who returned as prime minister after the breakup of the ruling coalition. The greater press freedom achieved in 2005 was reduced by physical attacks on journalists and failure to complete the trial of the killers of journalist Georgy Gongadze.

The home of Lilia Bujurova, editor of the weekly *Pervaya Krimskaya* and president of the Crimean Association of Independent Journalists, was set fire to in the Crimean capital of Simferopol in the early hours of 1 March 2006. She blamed the attack on her publication of a list of crime-linked candidates in the 26 March Crimean parliamentary elections.

Other journalists were threatened or physically attacked during the year. Volodymyr Katsman, editor of the paper *Stolichnye Novosti*, was badly beaten up in his apartment building on 8 April by two thugs with sticks and hospitalised with serious head and arm injuries. The paper received an envelope contained white powder and a note on 8 June. Someone claiming to be one of the attackers threatened his colleagues, especially investigative journalist Sherhy Kovtunenکو, warning that they would have no protection and that calling in police would not help. The official probe into Katsman's beating has made no progress and the paper has asked for police protection for the two journalists.

Margarita Zakora, editor of the weekly *Dzerzhynets* in Dniprodzerzhynsk, was hounded personally and by legal officials over several months. The paper, launched in January 2006, had become popular with a campaign against corruption among regional officials, who filed 19 almost-identical lawsuits against Zakora. Shots were fired at her apartment in June after the paper had criticised a businessman, Aleksander Spektor. After a second critical article, Spektor distributed pornographic leaflets about her and her 20-year-old daughter, including their addresses. Zakora asked for police and court protection but despite solid evidence of this harassment, no action was taken.

Vladimir Lutiev, editor of the weekly *Evpatoriskaya Nedelia*, was sentenced to eight years in prison on 12 July for alleged corruption after being held

since June 2005 when former Crimean MP Nikolai Kotliarevsky accused him of attempted murder. Lutiev had often criticised him in print for electoral fraud and corruption and Kotliarevsky is being prosecuted in two criminal cases. The court trying Lutiev refused to hear defence witnesses or evidence, according to his lawyer, Viktor Oveshkin, who said the journalist was being hounded by former local officials because he had accused them of corruption.

Five organisers and triggermen accused of killing Igor Alexandrov, head of the *TOR TV* station in the Slaviansk region of Donetsk, in 2001 were sentenced to between two and a half and 15 years in prison on 7 June by an appeal court in Lugansk after a two-month trial. The journalist had been beaten with a baseball bat on 3 July 2001 and died of head injuries four days later in hospital. In autumn 2003, the public prosecutor's office announced the killers had been identified and members of a criminal gang charged.

### IMPORTANT TRIALS

A court in Kiev resumed hearings on 14 September in the trial of the accused killers of journalist Georgy Gongadze, editor of *Ukrainskaya Pravda*, two days before the sixth anniversary of his disappearance. Neither his mother Lessia nor his widow Myroslava were present and the countless obstacles in the case increased fears that those really responsible would never be brought to justice. The "Melnichenko tapes" disclosed by the media indicated that the decision to get rid of Gongadze was made at the highest levels of government, but despite the change of regime and promises by President Yushchenko, who opened the trial to the public, the investigation has made no progress.

## UKRAINE

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Yushchenko said the day the trial resumed that Gongadze's name had become "a symbol of political change and freedom of expression" in Ukraine. But the constant problems with the case do not bear out this optimism and more and more people accuse prosecutor-general Oleksandr Medvedko of trying to slow down the investiga-

tion and influence its outcome. Gongadze's widow said in mid-August she would sue the prosecutors. Hearings since then have involved contradictory evidence on the two key questions of whether Gongadze was killed because of his journalistic work and whether his work threatened the then President Leonid Kuchma or one of his aides.

## UNITED KINGDOM

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Area: 242,910 sq.km.  
Population: 59,668,000.  
Language: English.  
Head of government: Tony Blair.

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Threats remain to journalists and press freedom in Northern Ireland and elsewhere in the UK five years after the murder of the reporter Martin O'Hagan, for which no one has been punished.

The failure of the police investigation into the 2001 murder of *Sunday World* reporter Martin O'Hagan, and continuing deaths threats to several colleagues, makes Northern Ireland a hostile place for journalists investigating the crime gangs spawned by years of sectarian strife. The National Union of Journalists, to which O'Hagan belonged, submitted questions to police on the fifth anniversary of his murder in September, asking why the investigation had failed, despite official pledges to catch the killers.

In the O'Hagan case, a coroner's inquest was finally held on 19 December 2006, and its findings supported the police theory that he had been shot outside his home in Lurgan, County Armagh, because he was investigating loyalist paramilitaries involved in drug trafficking. A policeman told the inquest he believed that eight men questioned in the case - but not prosecuted for lack of evidence - had been behind the murder. The police are to review their stalled investigation this year and, separately, the police ombudsman is examining allegations that elements of the police colluded with and sought to protect police agents or informers inside the murder gang. The police have always denied this.

The apparent impunity for O'Hagan's killers did not help local press freedom and, despite the peace process, various groups are still threatening

investigative journalists. In all, about a dozen journalists and two newspaper groups in Northern Ireland are believed to be working under violent threat. The latest was another *Sunday World* reporter, who was advised by police in August to seek official protection under a UK government scheme to assist threatened people. However, government ministers later refused to protect him, saying he did not qualify because he was a journalist and "not employed in one of the occupations normally covered by the scheme".

The former British home secretary, Charles Clarke, said in April that a "pernicious and even dangerous poison" had entered the media's world view after the *Guardian*, *Observer* and *Independent* carried articles attacking the government's civil liberties record. He accused the media of criticising democracies because of the lack of dictatorships to target, and of taking a simplistic approach to striking a balance between freedom and security.

The *BBC* was attacked in October by the opposition Conservatives who accused it of making propaganda for the Taliban in Afghanistan after the TV programme *Newsnight* carried an interview with one of its leaders. The *BBC* replied that reporting the views of the Taliban was part of its job. Surprisingly, the privately owned *Sky News*, which also screened an interview with a Taliban commander, was not criticised.

## UZBEKISTAN



Area: 447,400 sq.km.  
Population: 26,900,000.  
Language: Uzbek.  
Head of state: Islam Karimov.

The regime's broad crackdown since May 2005 has also targeted local and foreign media. Foreign journalists are seen as agitators and "terrorists" and Uzbek freelancers who work with them are prosecuted. Arrests, internment and blocked websites were routine for journalists in 2006.

Repression has become harsher since the 13 May 2005 uprising in the eastern town of Andijan, when about 800 people were killed, according to non-governmental organisations (187 according to the government). Offices of foreign media were closed and their staff forced to leave the country, including those of the *British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC)*, the US media aid organisation *Internews* and *Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty*.

The government cancelled the accreditation of Obid Shabanov, correspondent of the German broadcaster *Deutsche Welle* in the southern region of Bukhara, on 15 March 2006 and accused him of putting out inaccurate news in a 1 February programme on the station, when he reported that some 30 people had frozen to death in an unheated bus on its way to Moscow.

The government announced on 24 February that journalists working for foreign media that criticised official policies risked losing their accreditation for interfering in "internal affairs" or insulting the "dignity and reputation" of Uzbeks. The procedure for registering with the authorities was extended from 10 days to two months. Foreign and Uzbek journalists were forbidden to work with unaccredited Uzbek colleagues on pain of prosecution. Journalists were likened to terrorists and the decree said those who "called for the overthrow of the state or incited racial and religious hatred" would be deported.

Uzbek journalists were front-line targets of the crackdown. Six reporters on the government paper *Pravda Vostoka* were dismissed in July after the presidential office called them "politically unreliable." The journalists (Jamilya Aipova, Olga Fazylova and others) contributed the independent website *Tribune* ([www.tribune-uz.info](http://www.tribune-uz.info)). Two independent journalists, Ulugbek Khaidarov and Jamshid Karimov (the president's nephew), were also victims.

Karimov vanished on 12 September between his home and the hospital in Jizak where his mother was a patient. His family found out on 5 October that he had been interned in a mental hospital and would be held there for at least five months. Khaidarov was arrested on 14 September and falsely accused of "extortion and blackmail" after a woman approached him at a bus stop and stuffed some banknotes in his pocket that he quickly threw on the ground. Police arrested him a few seconds later. He was sentenced to six years in prison by a court in Jizak on 5 October before being freed without explanation a month later.

Sabirjon Yakubov, former correspondent for the independent paper *Hurriyat*, was freed on 4 April 2006 after charges against him of "undermining constitutional order" and "involvement with a extremist religious organisation" were dropped. He had been arrested in Tashkent on 11 April 2005 and been imprisoned in an intelligence services (SNB) detention centre.

Internet users were also targeted. All local service providers (ISPs) have been forced since November 2005 to use the state-controlled telecom operator *Uzbektelecom*, which enables the regime to compile blacklists. The website of independent journalist Sergei Ezhkov, *Uzmetronom.com*, was blocked in June 2006. He is one of the very few journalists openly critical of the regime.

Alo Khojayev, editor of the website *Tribune-uz*, decided to close it down in early July, as he and his family had been receiving threats since May 2005, when he posted online news about the Andijan uprising that contradicted the official version. The authorities refused to let him leave the country, even though he had hounded and efforts made to intimidate him, so he stopped working as a journalist.