



Justice for Journalists

Foundation for International
Investigations of Crime against Media

ATTACKS ON JOURNALISTS, BLOGGERS AND MEDIA WORKERS IN BELARUS, RUSSIA AND UKRAINE

2017-2019





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AUTHORS OF THE REPORT

- **Belarus:** [The Belarusian Association of Journalists](#)

The Belarusian Association of Journalists (BAJ), is a non-governmental, non-profit and non-partisan association of media workers, promoting freedom of expression and independent journalism ideas in Belarus.

The main goal of BAJ is to facilitate the exercise of civil, social, cultural, economic and professional rights and the pursuit of legitimate interests of its members, help to develop expertise and get a chance for creative self-fulfillment, as well as to create conditions that enable freedom of the press, including the journalists right to obtain and impart information without any interference.

The main tasks of BAJ activities are:

- BAJ protects journalists' rights and legitimate interests in state bodies and international organizations;
- BAJ helps to create material, technical, organizational and other facilities, vital for improving journalist proficiency;
- BAJ is drawing up an effective program to develop mass media so that it would create favorable conditions for their functioning in Belarus;
- BAJ establishes relations with journalist organizations all over the world.

- **Russia:** [Justice for Journalists Foundation](#)

Justice for Journalists Foundation (JFJ) is a London-based non-governmental organization. The foundation was created in August 2018 by Mikhail Khodorkovsky, founder of the Open Russia pro-democracy movement, an Amnesty International-recognised prisoner of conscience, and Putin's most prominent critic, together with his former business partner, philanthropist and member of the Free Russia Forum's standing committee Leonid Nevzlin.

JFJ funds journalistic investigations into violent crimes against media workers and helps professional and citizen journalists to mitigate their risks. Our mission is to facilitate journalists' access to existing resources and make them relevant to the specifics of each region. We believe security is the essential basis for work in the media. We help journalists acquire the skills and knowledge to address their professional challenges.

JFJ's activity consists of three main components:

- Grants for investigating violent crimes against media workers;
- Risk mapping via monitoring, analysing and publicising attacks against media workers;
- Risk management and prevention by organising security and safety trainings for non-English speaking media workers in our Orkhan Dzhemal Media Safety Academy.

JFJ cooperates with international media workers and press freedom activists, human rights and educational organisations, and think-tanks on media security issues and investigations into crimes against journalists.

- **Россия: Association Grani**

Association Grani (France) – an NGO established to combat Internet censorship. In 2015, the jury of the French national human rights award “Freedom. Equality. Brotherhood” awarded Association Grani for its contribution to the fight against censorship in Russia.

- **Ukraine: [The National Union of Journalists of Ukraine](#)**

The National Union of Journalists of Ukraine (NUJU) is the biggest organization, which brings together journalists and other employees of the mass media in Ukraine. The union is an independent public non-profit organization. The mission is the development of journalism and media in Ukraine and protection of freedom of speech and journalists' rights.

NUJU cooperates with international organizations and institutions of the United Nations, the EU, the Council of Europe, the International Federation of Journalists, the European Federation of Journalists, the RFS (Reporters Without Borders) and communicates with foreign professional media organizations, concludes agreements with them on cooperation in the field of professional activity, exchange of information, establishment of journalistic exchanges (Poland, Belarus, China, Lithuania, Germany, Italy, etc.).

NUJU conducts conferences, public hearings on the topic of freedom of speech and the safety of journalists, actively participates in the preparation of changes in the Ukrainian media-law, provides legal support for journalistic activities, co-organizer of different forums, festivals, promotions, press tours, seminars, etc.

- **Photographers**

The Belarusian Association of Journalists (Belarus); Ludmila Savitskaya, Andrey Zolotov (MBK Media, Russia); The National Union of Journalists of Ukraine (Ukraine).



INTRODUCTION

This report forms part three of a cycle of research studies on attacks against media workers in the 12 post-Soviet countries over the period from 2017 through 2019. As used in this report, the term “media workers” refers to journalists, bloggers, camera operators, photojournalists, and other employees and managers of traditional and unregistered media. This section of the study is devoted to Belarus, Russia, and Ukraine.

The report does not cover attacks against professional and citizen journalists in Crimea; statistics on assaults in this region have yet to be incorporated into the Media Risk Map. Full information about this topic can be found in the report [Chronology of pressing the freedom of speech in Crimea](#), put together by the Crimean Human Rights Group and the Human Rights Centre ZMINA and published on February 9, 2020.

Assaults on media workers in the three Slavic states are being examined in a single report not only because of the geographic proximity and cultural similarity of these countries, but also to make it more convenient to compare the methods of suppressing freedom of speech that prevail in them.

METHODOLOGY

The data for the study have been obtained from open sources in the English, Belarusian, Russian, and Ukrainian languages using the method of content analysis. Lists of the main sources are presented in Annexes 2-7.

Based on further analysis of 3,063 incidents of assaults on professional and citizen journalists, bloggers, and other media workers, as well as on the editorial offices of traditional and online publications, three basic types of attacks have been identified:

- ▶ Physical attacks and threats to life, liberty, and health
- ▶ Non-physical and/or cyber-attacks and threats
- ▶ Attacks via judicial and/or economic means

Each of the types of attacks presented is further divided into sub-categories, a complete list of which is presented in Annex 1.

PRINCIPAL TRENDS

The total combined population of Belarus, Russia, and Ukraine numbers nearly 200 million people, which corresponds to approximately 45% of the population of the European Union. For a proper analysis of the risks of assaults on media workers, it would be advisable to look at not the absolute numbers of attacks, but at the relative figures: per 100 thousand people. According to calculations, journalists from Belarus are subject to the greatest risk of assault, although the risk of physical assault is higher in Ukraine.

Country	Population	Number of attacks 2017-2019	Attacks per 100,000 (Risk Index)	Physical attacks per 100,000 (Risk Index)
Belarus	9 449 323	1079	11.42	0.28
Russia (without Crimea)	144 386 830	1116	0.77	0.16
Ukraine	43 733 762	868	1.98	0.55

Source for population statistics: worldometers.info, [Pocstat](http://pocstat.gov.by).

Belarus holds second place after Armenia among the 12 post-Soviet countries in terms of the relative number of attacks against media workers per 100 thousand people, with a risk index of 11.4. The principal method of assaults on journalists in Belarus are attacks via judicial and/or economic means – these comprise 89% of the total. The principal source of danger for media workers are the authorities – above all the police and the courts. A “package” form of attacks predominates in Belarus, in the course of which a media worker is detained short-term, tried, and arrested for 72 hours and sentenced to payment of a fine. The most frequent “administrative offence” is cooperation by Belarusian freelance journalists with foreign media without Foreign Ministry accreditation. Sometimes searches of a journalist’s work premises and residence with confiscation of equipment and documents form a component part of such a “package attack”.

Russia, along with Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan, exhibits indicators of relative risk of being subjected to assault that are not high for post-Soviet countries – 0.77. However, for Moscow, with a population of 12.5 million persons, this risk comprises a considerably higher 2.95. It may be assumed that such numbers can be explained by the peculiarities of monitoring assaults in this country.



Russia stands out with its high number of deaths among media workers: 15 people perished as the result of murders, accidents, beatings, and suicides, a number twice as high as in all 11 post-Soviet countries taken together. The most widespread type of assaults on media workers in the country are attacks via judicial and economic means. The number of recorded short-term detentions of journalists by police in the period covered in this study exceeded 200 incidents, while 40 journalists were sentenced to various terms of deprivation of liberty.

In **Ukraine**, the relative index of attacks against journalists comprises nearly 2 per 100 thousand people, which puts the country in sixth place among the 12 post-Soviet countries in terms of degree of risk for media workers, between Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. It should be noted that in zones of combat activities – Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts – 43 assaults on journalists have been recorded, while in Kiev Oblast the number is 385. Nearly 28% of all recorded assaults on media workers in Ukraine consist of attacks of a physical nature (beatings, abductions, attempted murders). Moreover, in more than half of the cases, those committing the assaults were not connected with the authorities. In this country, the prevailing methods for pressuring journalists are bullying and intimidation, including in cyberspace, as well as damaging and seizure of property and documents. The decline in the overall number of attacks from 357 in 2017 to 245 in 2019 gives cause for optimism.

RISK REDUCTION MECHANISMS

Analysis of the risks for media workers, as well as of their geography, frequency, and sources, is a necessary precondition for working out methods of protection and safeguards. Even taking into account the limitations associated with the ability to track assaults on media workers, analysis of the data obtained allows us to offer several recommendations for more effectively withstanding attacks in each of these countries.

- In **Belarus**, the source of the attacks on journalists in the overwhelming majority of cases is the authorities, while the function of the courts usually comes down to rubber-stamping a repressive decision that has already been adopted. That said, there is a rather effective system of monitoring attacks in place in Belarus, a country where the president has been in office for more than 26 years already and independent media inside the country have been practically annihilated while Belarusian journalists are subjected to harsh administrative and even criminal prosecution for cooperation with foreign publications.

In these conditions, public disclosure of incidents of assaults on journalists, drawing public attention, payment of fines, and in the event of repeated targeted attacks, leaving the country and continuing to work abroad, present themselves as the most effective methods of protection.

- In **Russia**, the risks for media workers are increasing with each passing year and come above all from the authorities, who regularly deprive professional and citizen journalists of liberty and beat them up. Besides that, the adoption of ever more repressive laws is expanding the arsenal of methods of “judicial” influence on independent media, compelling an ever greater number of

journalists to leave the profession. In the meantime, the number of fatal incidents, attempted murders, beatings, and torture of journalists growing, while the investigations of these incidents remain at an unsatisfactory level.

Recording the various types of attacks on independent publications and journalists has important significance for a more precise assessment of the risks. Drawing public attention to violations of the rights of media workers remains the most effective method of protecting Russia's journalists. Besides that, it is extremely important to provide them with timely and professional legal assistance. Inasmuch as one fifth of all attacks are connected with beatings of journalists, training courses on physical security would allow for a reduction in the risk of physical assaults.

- In **Ukraine**, the overall number of attacks on journalists is dropping, but the risk of physical assaults nonetheless remains high. Monitoring of threats and non-physical attacks is efficiently organised in this country, which is instrumental in intensifying vigilance on the part of journalists. It is perhaps on account of this that it is proving possible to prevent some portion of the more egregious crimes. That said, the work of the courts in investigating crimes against journalists and finding and punishing the perpetrators does not seem to be effective.

In such conditions, the work of improving the monitoring of assaults ought to be continued, as should the informing of broad strata of society about the situation and the adoption of the necessary measures of protection, including protection by the state. Besides that, training courses on physical and cyber security for journalists have proven useful.

The Justice for Journalists Foundation, together with its partners and experts, carries out weekly monitoring of attacks against media workers in all post-Soviet countries excluding the Baltic states, the results of which are published on the Media Risk Map in both [Russian](#) and [English](#) languages. The available data covers the period from 2017 onwards.



ATTACKS ON JOURNALISTS, BLOGGERS AND MEDIA WORKERS

BELARUS



Photo: Euroradio

1/ KEY FINDINGS

1,079 incidents of attacks/threats in relation to professional and citizen media workers and editorial offices of traditional and online publications in Belarus were identified and analysed in the course of the study. The data were obtained from open sources in the Russian, Belarusian, and English languages using the method of content analysis. A list of the main sources is presented in Annex 2.

1. Attacks via judicial and/or economic means are the most widespread form of pressure on journalists, bloggers, and media workers in Belarus. 957 incidents in this category were recorded.
2. The most prevalent method of attack via judicial and/or economic means is fines for cooperation with foreign media without Foreign Ministry accreditation. The number of incidents in this sub-category is 236.
3. The number of physical attacks in Belarus is very low in comparison with other countries in the post-Soviet space. 26 attacks in this category were recorded over the period covered in this study.
4. The BelTA case is the most high-profile criminal case to be brought against a media workers in Belarus in the years 2017-2019.
5. Most often it was freelance journalists working for the satellite television channel Belsat who were subjected to attacks – in 623 of the 1,079 recorded cases.

2/ THE MASS MEDIA IN BELARUS

Registration of print media in Belarus, just like television and radio broadcasters, is mandatory and by license, and is exercised by the Ministry of Information. According to [data](#) provided by the agency, 1,614 print media outlets were registered in Belarus as of January 1, 2020. Of these, 435 print publications are state-owned, which allows the Belarusian authorities to state that private media predominate in the country. However, the vast majority of non-state-owned print media are strictly entertainment and advertising. According to the data of the Belarusian Association of Journalists (BAJ), there are no more than 30 registered non-state-owned media outlets of a socio-political nature. Nearly half of these were removed from the state's newspaper subscription and retail distribution networks as far back as 2005, and only in 2017 were they put back on the distribution lists of the state monopoly distribution enterprises (approximately 15 publications had ceased publication by this time).

At the same time, state-owned media receive not only administrative support and various kinds of preferences, but also public funding given out on a non-competitive basis. In 2019, the sum of such funding exceeded 72 million US dollars. The bulk of these funds (over 50 million dollars) were earmarked for the funding of the [Belteleradiocompany](#) [the state-owned broadcaster].

The situation with television and radio broadcasting in Belarus meets democratic standards even less. Of the 270 registered television and radio programmes, the overwhelming majority (188) belong to the state. The remaining 82 non-state-owned television and radio stations are under the complete control of the authorities, both local and national, by virtue of the registration and licensing system.

Foreign stations disrupt the state's monopoly on broadcasting. Radio Liberty, European Radio for Belarus, Radio Racyja, and the satellite television channel Belsat play a particular role (the latter three media outlets listed are registered in Poland). Their programmes are aimed at Belarusians and are prepared primarily by Belarusians. However, neither Belsat nor Radio Racyja have legal status in Belarus, despite efforts to open news offices and obtain accreditation for their journalists.

Freelancers working with them come under constant pressure on the part of the authorities. Since 2014, they are being fined for “violation of the order for production and distribution of media output” (Article 22.9 of the Code of Administrative Offences). Based on police reports, in the years 2017-2019 freelance journalists were fined 231 times for working with foreign media without accreditation, for an overall sum equivalent to nearly 100 thousand US dollars. For reference, the average monthly salary in Belarus is around 500 dollars.

The internet remains the freest information space in Belarus. According to data from a study conducted by the Informational-and-Analytical Centre under the president’s administration, in 2017-2018 around 60 percent of respondents were receiving their news from the internet (72% from television), while among young people this percentage was significantly higher. Moreover, the majority of the ten most popular internet sites is made up of non-state-owned sites.

The Belarusian authorities reacted to the growing significance of the Internet by tightening control over it. At the end of 2017 and the start of 2018, by decision of the Ministry of Information, two popular news sites in Belarus were blocked: Belorussky partizan [Belarusian Partisan] and Khartiya 97 [Charter 97]. In 2018, criminal cases were opened against key players in this sphere (most notably the “BelTA case”; see Section 5 “Attacks via judicial and/or economic means”), and several popular regional bloggers came under pressure (in the form of criminal cases, administrative prosecution, and threats). Changes were introduced to legislation to tighten state regulation of the Belarusian segment of the World Wide Web. In particular, identification of users of internet sites was made mandatory, pre-moderation of comments was effectively introduced, and the culpability of website owners was increased. The new law allows for the voluntary registration of internet sites as media outlets (online publications), but this registration procedure has remained costly and complicated. Despite the fact that internet sites not registered as online publications are not now considered media outlets, and their journalists cannot enjoy the corresponding status, only 6 non-state-owned sites had gone through registration at the Ministry of Information as of January 1, 2020 due to the complexity of the registration requirements and the unclear benefits to be gained from this registration in the current circumstances.

In the annual [World Press Freedom](#) Index of Reporters Without Borders for 2020, Belarus ranks 153rd out of 180 countries.

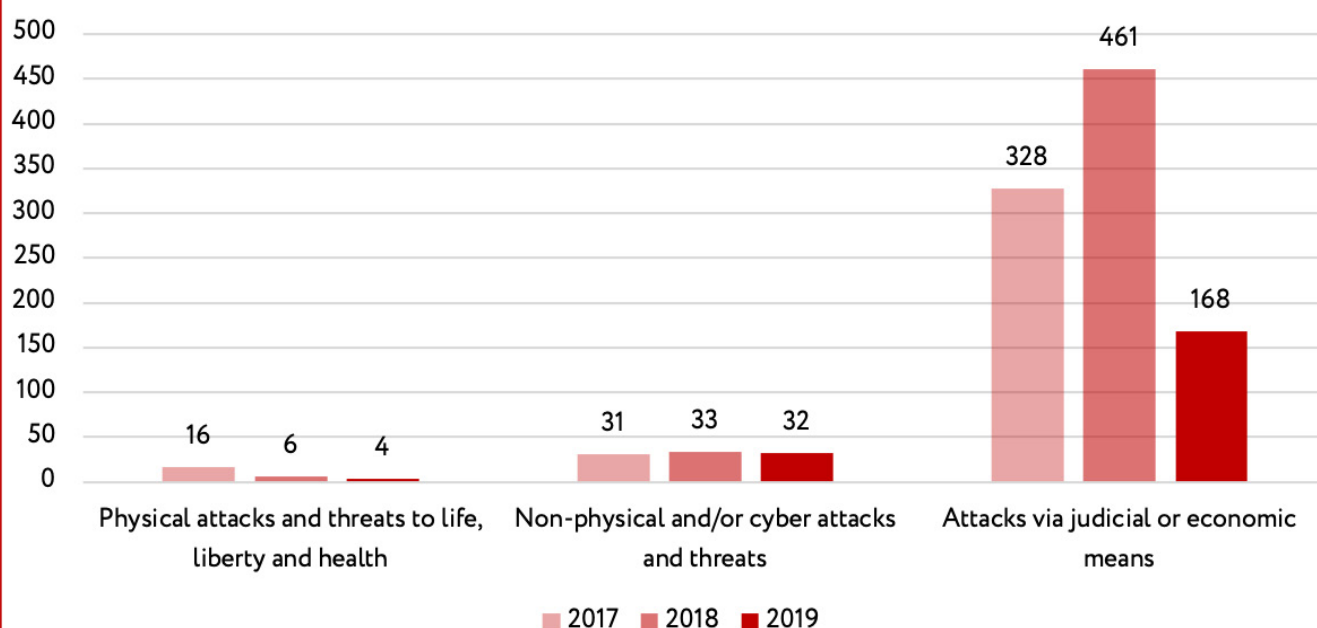
3 / GENERAL ANALYSIS OF ATTACKS

Figure 1 presents a quantitative analysis of the three main types of attack perpetrated against journalists in Belarus in the period from 2017 to 2019. The principal type of attack against journalists, bloggers, and media workers were attacks via judicial and/or economic means. These comprised 88% of the overall number of attacks captured in this study: 957 out of 1079.

The number of attacks of this type correlated with the change in the country’s political and economic situation. The increase in protest sentiments and mass demonstrations in Belarus also gave rise to intensified pressure on the media, journalists, and bloggers covering them. Thus, the peak of short-term detentions of journalist (93 people) in the period covered in this study occurred in 2017, when mass demonstrations against an unpopular presidential decree regarding the establishment of a special tax for unemployed people took place in all of the regions of the country.

During the period covered in this study, it was most often journalists from the satellite television channel Belsat who were the target of attacks – 623 out of the 1,079 recorded incidents. A number of journalists from the television channel experienced systematic pressure on the part of the authorities: Konstantin Zhukovsky (76), Olha Chaychits (59), Andrey Kozel (40), Alexandr Levchuk (36), Andrey Tolchin (34), Ekaterina Andreyeva (33), Dmitry Lupach (32), Milana Kharitonova (31), Larisa Shchiryakova (29), Sergey Kovalev (22), Lyubov Buryanova (Luneva) (19), Sergey Kvarchuk (16), Irina Orekhovskaya (13), Alina Skrabunova (12), and Alexandr Borozenko (11).

Figure 1: Attacks on journalists, bloggers and media workers in Belarus:
2017-2019



4 / PHYSICAL ATTACKS AND THREATS TO LIFE, HEALTH AND LIBERTY

The number of physical attacks on journalists in the period covered in this study was comparatively low at 26. As has already been noted, the majority of them (16) occurred during 2017, when mass protest actions were taking place in Belarus.

Most often, the journalists were subjected to violence during short-term detention or obstruction of their professional activity. Appearing as the main aggressors were representatives of the authorities (in 84% of the incidents), first and foremost police personnel. Thus, in Minsk on March 25, 2017, during the traditional Freedom Day opposition demonstration, 5 journalists were beaten up by security personnel, including a British journalist covering the protest action.

Most often, the victims of physical attacks became journalists working with the Belsat television channel – 15 of the 25 cases. Subjected to physical pressure five times during the period covered in this study was Konstantin Zhukovsky, a journalist from Gomel, who holds the record for the number of fines issued to him:

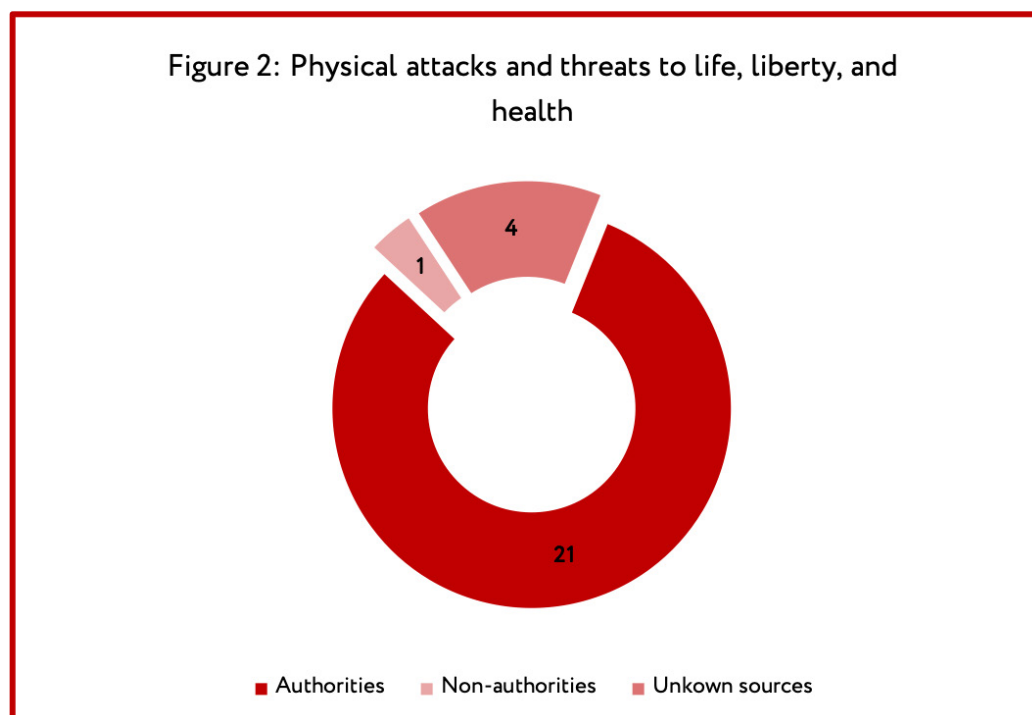
- In July 2017, Zhukovsky was detained short-term by employees of the traffic police (the state automobile inspectorate) when he was returning from a court where he had been covering the proceedings. The journalist was handcuffed to a tree.
- In August 2017, during a video shoot, he was sprayed in the face with an aerosol substance by a person who turned out to be a management employee of a local pig farm. Zhukovsky was hospitalised.
- In July 2018, the journalist suffered a hypertensive crisis after being detained short-term on a charge of petty hooliganism and taken to the local police station and then to court.
- In November 2018, the journalist was summoned to the military draft commissariat for a medical examination. He had already undergone a medical examination less than six months earlier but never had been subsequently called up for training.

- In January 2019, Zhukovsky was, in his words, assaulted by unidentified persons on a road in Gomel Oblast.

At the end of January 2019, Zhukovsky fled Belarus and requested political asylum in one of the countries of Western Europe.

In February 2018, the journalist Andrei Kozel, who likewise worked with the Belsat television channel and had been charged with administrative offenses on numerous occasions, was beaten up for attempting to film the vote-counting at a polling station. The journalist was brutally detained short-term and placed in detention, where he continued to get beaten up, and was subsequently charged with an administrative offence, allegedly for resisting employees of the police.

At the start of 2020, Kozel was forced to leave Belarus due to the constant pressure.



5/ NON-PHYSICAL AND/OR CYBER-ATTACKS AND THREATS

The most prevalent kinds of non-physical and/or cyber-attacks and threats over the period covered in this study were bullying, intimidation, pressure, and threats of violence and death, including in cyberspace. They comprised more than half (48) of the total number of recorded cases (95). The second most prevalent method of non-physical pressure is damage to or seizure of property, vehicles, equipment, or documents (16). Journalists encountered the highest number of attacks of this type (9) in 2018.

In Belarus, as in Russia and the countries of Central Asia, one of the most prevalent methods of attack is pressure on a media worker by way of non-physical pressure on relatives and loved ones:

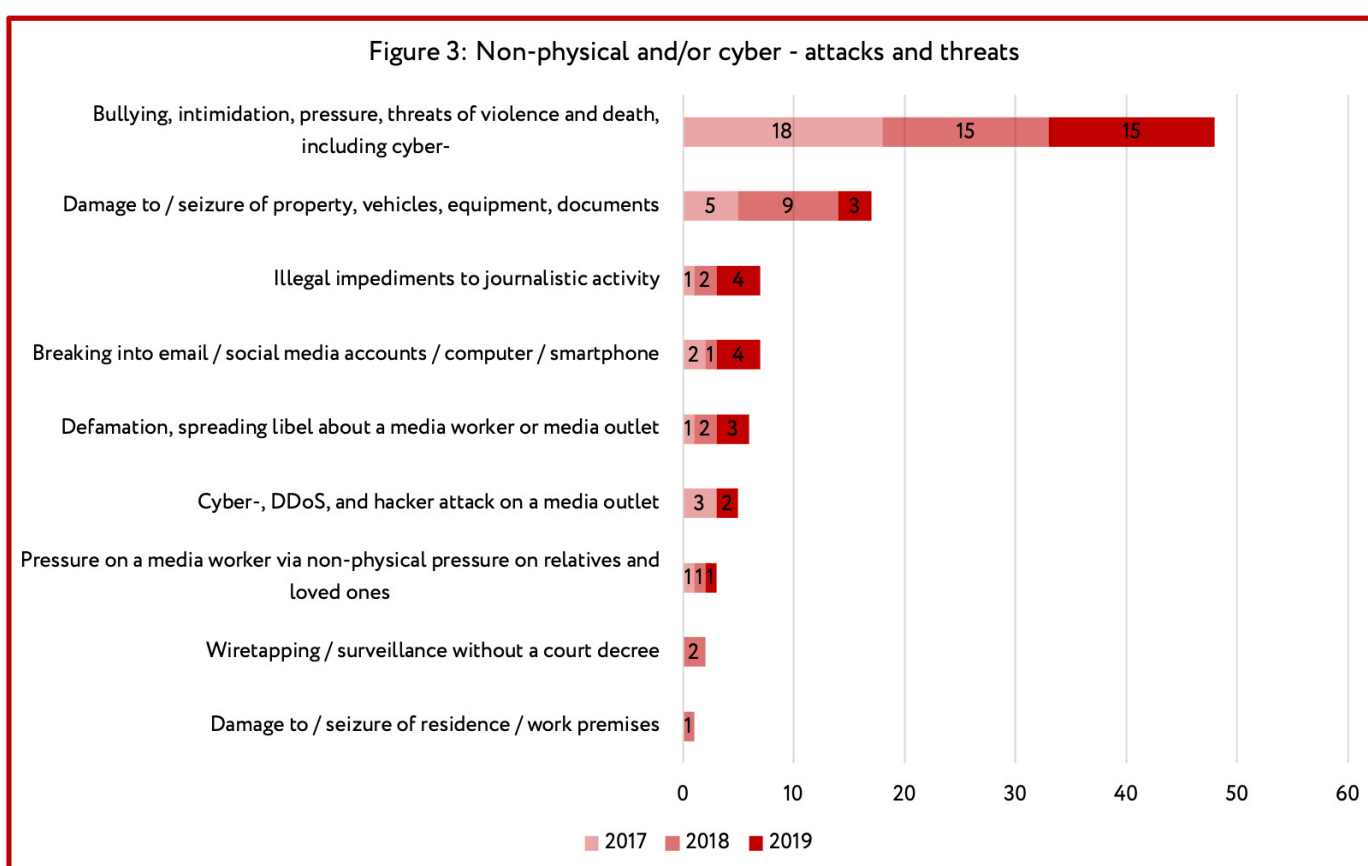
- In October 2017, the parents of Belsat journalist Alexandr Zalevsky were threatened over the phone by a stranger who identified himself as a KGB lieutenant.
- In February 2018, a search was carried out at the flat of YouTube blogger Stepan Putilo's parents. Security personnel seized a notebook computer and a video camera. Putilo, who was studying in Poland at that moment, was inculpated under Article 368 of the Criminal Code (insulting the president).

- In September 2019, Petr Kuznetsov, founder of Gomel website Silnye Novosti [Strong News], complained that he personally and his relatives and acquaintances are constantly having problems when crossing the border.

In a number of situations, representatives of the authorities threaten journalists with taking children from the family:

- In July 2017, representatives of the authorities threatened Belsat journalists Olha Chaychits and Andrey Kozel that they would file a complaint with child protection services regarding their children.
- In April 2017, they threatened to register the family of Belsat journalist Larisa Shchiryakova as indigent and to remove the child from the family.

Cyber-attacks are a less prevalent method. During the period covered in this study, 5 cases of hacking and DDoS attacks and 7 incidents associated with breaking into social media accounts were recorded.



6/ ATTACKS VIA JUDICIAL AND/OR ECONOMIC MEANS

Figure 4: Attacks via judicial or economic means

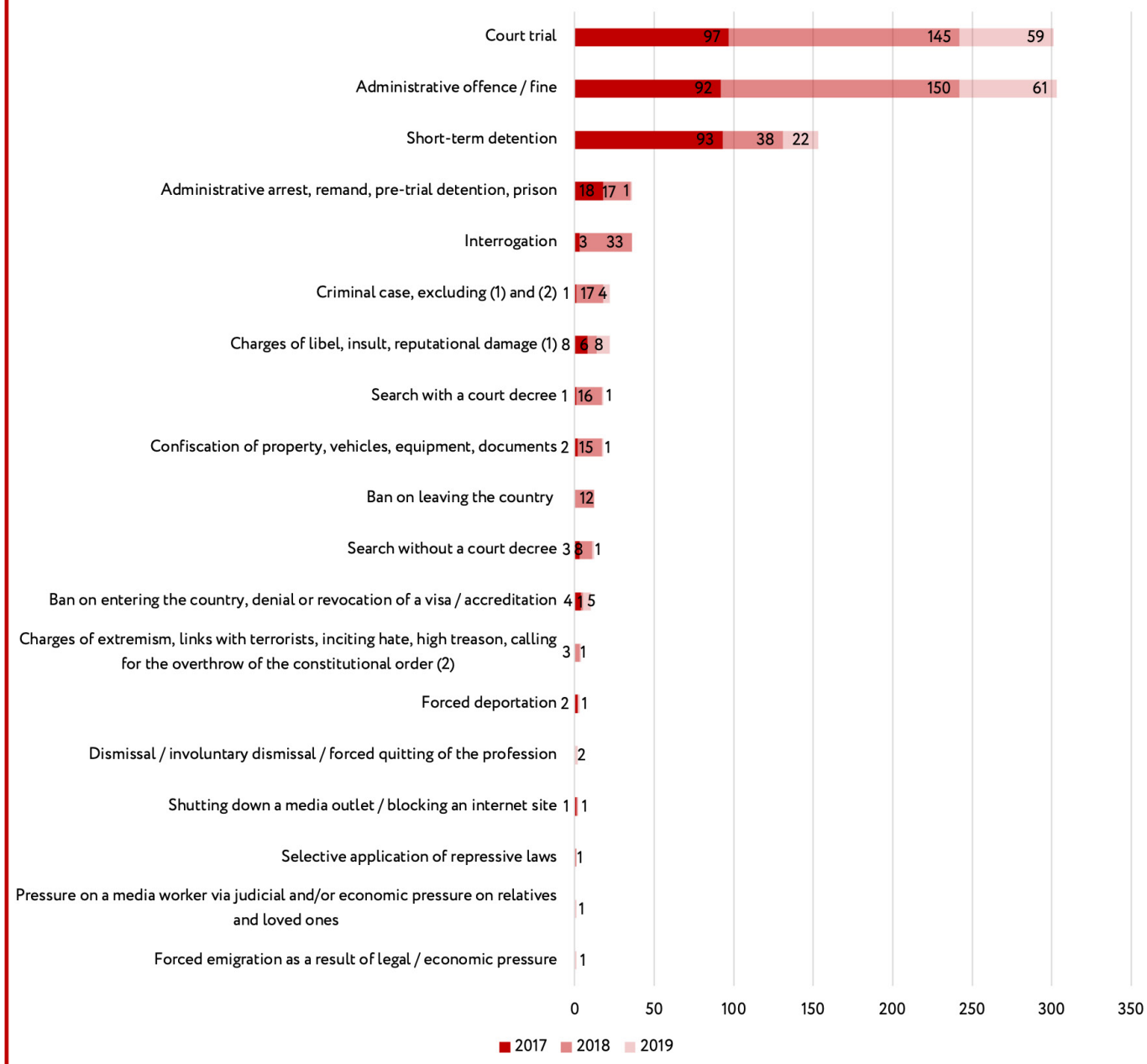
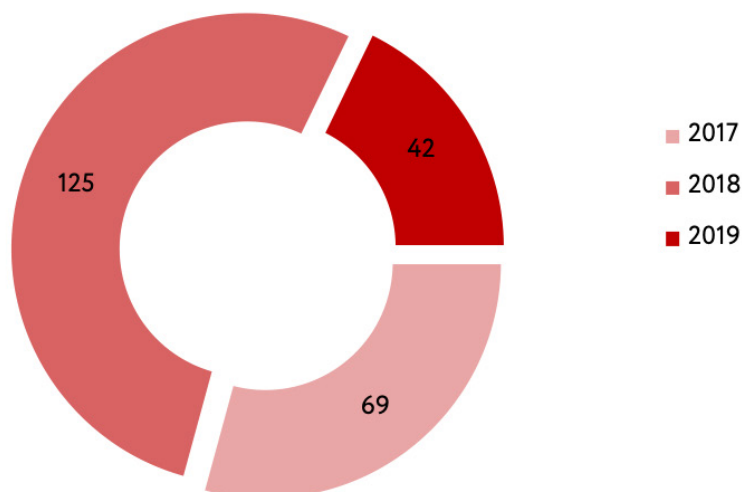


Figure 4 presents a general analysis of attacks via judicial and/or economic means. 957 attacks in this category were recorded during the period from 2017 through 2019. The top 3 methods of pressure include: administrative offences and fines; courts and court trials; and short-term detentions. In 942 out of the 957 recorded attacks in this category (i.e. 98% of the incidents), appearing as the “aggressors” were representatives of the authorities.

The most frequent reason for the attacks was the cooperation of Belarusian freelance journalists with foreign media without Foreign Ministry accreditation. Based on police reports, the courts fined journalists in accordance with Part 2 of Article 22.9 of the Code of Administrative Offences, which prescribes culpability for the illegal production and/or distribution of media output. 2018 became the “peak” year, when journalists were held administratively liable under this article no fewer than 122 times (more than in the previous four years combined). The overall sum of the fines for the year exceeded 43 thousand euros.

In most of the cases, the fines were issued to journalists working with the Belsat satellite television channel. Belsat is a part of the structure of Polish Television but positions itself as Belarus's first independent television channel. All told, journalists and employees of the Belsat television channel were subjected to attacks via judicial and/or economic means a total of 574 times during the period covered in this study.

Figure 5: Fines for working with the international media outlets without the accreditation of the Ministry of Internal Affairs



In March 2017 and April 2019, searches with confiscation of equipment were carried out under various pretexts in the Belsat television channel's unregistered Minsk news office. One of the pretexts was an accusation of unauthorised use by Belsat of its name (there is a commercial enterprise of the same name operating in Belarus). Journalists were asserting that after the seizure of the equipment, police employees were affixing a Belsat sticker on their gear, which later served as grounds for its confiscation on the pretext of trademark infringement.

Criminal prosecution of journalists, media editors, and bloggers (and the searches, interrogations, and arrests associated with this) was the harshest method of pressure. Moreover, in a number of instances, the criminal cases were not formally associated with freedom of expression. The "Regnum case", "BelTA case", and the criminal case against head of independent news agency BelaPAN Alexandr Lipai caused the biggest public outcry.

- **The "Regnum case":** In February 2018, the Minsk City Court issued a guilty verdict in a criminal case against three Belarusian authors who had been published in Russian media: Yury Pavlovets, Dmitry Alimkin, and Sergey Shiptenko. The court found them guilty of deliberate acts aimed at inciting hate between nationalities committed by a group of individuals, and sentenced them to five years of deprivation of liberty, with the serving of the sentence delayed by three years. The convicted parties were released in the courtroom. If they do not commit violations of public order and will be carrying out the court's directives during the three-year delayed-sentence period, the court may release them from serving their sentences. The pretext for initiating the "Regnum case" became a Ministry of Information appeal to the Investigative Committee regarding features of extremism allegedly discovered in these authors' publications. The defendants were held in custody for 14 months – from the moment of their short-term detention in December 2016.

- **The criminal case against Alexandr (Ales) Lipai:** In June 2018, a criminal case was opened in relation to Alexandr Lipai, head of leading Belarusian independent news agency BelaPAN, in connection with wilful income tax evasion in a particularly large amount in the years 2016-2017. A search was conducted of Lipai's flat; documents and professional equipment were seized. Belarusian human rights organisations claimed that there was a political undercurrent to the case and associated it with a general tendency of increasing pressure on non-state-owned media and Internet sites in Belarus. On August 23, 2018, Ales Lipai died of cancer at the age of 52. The criminal case against him was dropped following his death.
- **The "BelTA case":** In August 2018, raids were carried out at the editorial offices of the BelaPAN news company, the By web portal, and several other media outlets, as well as in the flats of a number of their employees. Around 20 journalists were detained short-term and interrogated by investigators. 8 were sent to a pre-trial temporary detention "isolator" for a term of up to 72 hours. Serving as the reason for the large-scale "special op" was the unsanctioned use by some journalists of passwords to the subscription feed of the government agency BelTA's website. It should be noted that the BelTA website materials are openly accessible free of charge and were posted by the media outlets that were now under pressure in consideration of all the rules established by BelTA. Nevertheless, criminal cases on unsanctioned access to computer information entailing the causing of significant harm were initiated in relation to 15 journalists. At the end of 2018, criminal cases in relation to 14 journalists were dropped and they were cited for administrative violations in the form of huge fines and compulsory payment of indemnification to state-owned media outlets – BelTA and the presidential administration's newspaper SB. Belarus segodnya. The only defendant to be held criminally liable became Marina Zolotova, editor-in-chief of the internet portal Tut.By. Notably, she was charged under a different article – failure to act by an official. In March 2019, the court found Zolotova guilty and sentenced her to a fine of 7,650 Belarusian roubles (more than 3,000 euros at the National Bank exchange rate).

Among the most serious internet-related violations, the blocking of popular internet sites that cover socio-political topics ought to be pointed out. There were two such blockings, and both became high-profile. Both internet sites were accused of distributing prohibited information (including on the conducting of unsanctioned mass demonstrations). But not only were they not issued any warnings that they were breaking the law or demands to remove specific materials, they did not even know what materials specifically had served as the grounds for their being blocked in Belarus. The websites continue their activity following a change of their domain extensions:

- In December 2017, the Ministry of Information adopted a decision on restricting access to the Belorussky partizan website, the founder of which was the well-known journalist Pavel Sheremet, who had been working in Ukraine in recent years and tragically died there in 2016.
- In January 2018, access was restricted to another popular website, Khartiya 97, whose editorial staff has been working in Poland in recent years (after the criminal prosecution of editor-in-chief Natalia Radina and a number of website employees on charges of organising mass disorders following the 2010 presidential elections).

ATTACKS ON JOURNALISTS, BLOGGERS AND MEDIA WORKERS

RUSSIA



Photo: Andrey Zolotov/ MBK Media

1/ KEY FINDINGS

1,116 instances of attacks/threats against professional and civilian media workers and the editorial offices of traditional and online publications in Russia were identified and analysed in the course of the study. The data were obtained from open sources in the Russian and English languages using the method of content analysis. A list of the main sources is presented in Annex 3.

1. Russia remains a country in which the journalist's profession is associated with elevated risks to life, health, and liberty. From 2017 through 2019, a minimum of 15 Russian media workers lost their lives, and one person has disappeared without a trace. For comparison: in the remaining 11 post-Soviet countries, the aggregate population of which is practically the same as Russia's population, 7 media workers have died..
2. The main source of attacks on journalists in Russia are representatives of the authorities – 68% of all assaults can be attributed to them.
3. 63% of all attacks against journalists are carried out via judicial and economic means, above all short-term detentions, administrative and criminal cases, and involuntary dismissals.
4. Monitoring of assaults on media workers works best in the capitals, which is also where the bulk of independent professional and citizen journalists are concentrated. Rapid dissemination of information on unlawful short-term detention, abduction, or other pressure on a media worker increases the likelihood of a favourable outcome.
5. Russia, along with Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and Tajikistan, widely practices persecution of citizen and professional journalists on charges of inciting hate and defending terrorism and extremism. Among other methods of suppressing freedom of speech that unite Russia with the former republics of the USSR are punitive psychiatry (likewise used by Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan) and intimidation of the relatives of journalists (as in Azerbaijan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan).

Taking into account the situation with freedom of the mass media, which is getting worse with each passing year, as well as the peculiarities of the practices in some regions, it can be said with confidence that many threats and attacks of various types never do become public knowledge. Journalists have become accustomed to writing about others and are not always prepared to “make news” themselves and become the central protagonists of publications.

With rare exceptions, assaults on media workers in Russia remain uninvestigated, while the perpetrators do not receive lawful punishment. In this situation, monitoring and analysis of attacks and threats to journalists are particularly important, inasmuch as this work allows the most common risks to be identified and managed.

Besides that, verbal bullying, threats, cyber-attacks, and breaking into social network pages and emails are regarded by the majority of journalists working in Russia as an unavoidable part of everyday professional activity. Such incidents are rarely made public- this explains why they comprise a relatively low percentage of recorded attacks.

2/ THE MEDIA IN RUSSIA

In the 2020 edition of the [annual press freedom index](#) published by Reporters Without Borders, Russia occupies 149th place out of 180.

According to the Freedom of the Net [report](#) for 2019 compiled by Freedom House, Russia lacks freedom of the internet (31 points out of 100). This indicator places Russia in the same group of countries as China, Saudi Arabia, and Cuba.

Foreign individuals and legal entities are prohibited from owning more than 20% of any one publication in Russia.

TOTAL NUMBER OF MEDIA OUTLETS AND AUDIENCE SHARE

According to the data of the Federal Service for Supervision in the Sphere of Telecom, Information Technologies, and Mass Communications [Roskomnadzor], as of December 31, 2019 the total number of registered media outlets comprises 65,849, of which 42,882 are print, 21,770 are electronic, and 1,197 are news agencies. In just 2019 alone, 1,894 print media outlets, 2,012 electronic media outlets, and 80 news agencies were registered. According to Roskomnadzor's [data](#), the number of newspapers and magazines in Russia fell from 2009 to 2019 by approximately 40%, which is the highest indicator in the past 10 years. In just 2019 alone, 7,498 registration entries were removed from the media register.

According to the [data](#) of the Levada-Center's annual report on the media landscape in Russia in 2019, television remains the main source of news for 73% of the population. Moreover, trust in this source over 10 years has fallen from 80% to 52%. 39% of those surveyed get their news from internet publications and social networks. The audience for radio and newspapers over 10 years has shrunk by more than half – a mere 15% of Russians use them to get news.

The leading TV channels as of the end of 2019 [remain](#) Rossiya 1, Perviy kanal [First Channel], and NTV. The major broadcast grid does not include a single channel that would offer independent, objective news. The only such channel is Rain, which is accessible on the internet and has only a 1% audience share.

STATE MEDIA

The main sources of funding of the state media are the state, AO Natsionalnaya Media Gruppa, and Gazprom-Media.

- ▶ Perviy kanal is owned by the Federal Agency for State Property Management [Rosimushchestvo] (38.9%), AO Natsionalnaya Media Gruppa (29%), VTB Capital (20%), TASS (9.1%), and Ostankino (3%).
- ▶ The founder of the private media holding company Natsionalnaya Media Gruppa is the Russian billionaire and owner of Severstal, Alexey Mordashov. Among Natsionalnaya Media Gruppa's media assets are Perviy kanal, REN TV, STS, Pyatiy kanal [Fifth Channel], Telekanal 78, the newspaper Izvestiya, and others.
- ▶ Gazprom-Media belongs to Gazprombank and owns the NTV, TNT, TV3, and Pyatnitsa [Friday] television channels and a multitude of other entertainment channels, magazines, internet sites, and radio stations, including Ekho Moskvyy. The director-general of the Gazprom-Media holding company is ex head of the Federal Service for Supervision in the Sphere of Telecom, Information Technologies, and Mass Communications [Roskomnadzor] Alexandr Zharov.
- ▶ The All-Russian State Television and Radio Broadcasting Company (VGTRK) was founded by the

Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR in 1990. The corporation includes the Rossiya 1, Rossiya 2, and Rossiya 24 channels and others.

- ▶ The most popular Russian channel abroad is Russia Today, financed out of the Russian Federation budget. [Information](#) was published in April 2020 about how Russia Today had spent 22.3 billion roubles received from the federal budget in 2019.

INDEPENDENT MEDIA

Despite the fact that independent media lag far behind state media in terms of audience size, they are often the most heavily cited in social media (number of links in social networks). According to the data of the Medialogiya media monitoring and analysis service (63% owned by VTB bank), as of January 2020:

- ▶ The top five most cited newspapers include Novaya gazeta (4th place).
- ▶ The troika of the most cited television channels includes Rain, which holds second place (536,125 hyperlinks in the social networks).
- ▶ Among the most cited radio stations, Radio Liberty holds first place; Ekho Moskvyy is second.
- ▶ In the citations rating for internet sites, the Meduza portal holds second place, and MBK media.

MEDIA LEGISLATION

“Lugovoy’s law”, adopted in 2014, allows Roskomnadzor, upon the instruction of the General Prosecutor’s Office of the RF, to summarily block websites that are allegedly disseminating calls for mass disorders and extremist information without a court ruling.

- ▶ In 2014, the opposition media websites ru, Kasparov.ru, and Yezhednevniy zhurnal were blocked.
- ▶ According to the Internet Trends 2019 [report](#), in 2018, access to nearly 650 thousand websites was prohibited in Russia – five times more than a year earlier.
- ▶ In 2019, the international human rights group Agora and the civic organisation Roskomsvoboda [recorded](#) 438,981 instances of interference with freedom of the internet in Russia, of which 434,275 were associated with restricting access to internet sites and services, as well as with bans on various kinds of news.

According to the Law on the Mass Information Media, as of January 1, 2016, the stake of foreign shareholders in the charter capital of Russian mass information media shall be limited 20%, foreigners and dual citizens shall be prohibited from appearing as founders of mass information media in the RF. According to the amendments to this law adopted in December 2019, NGOs, mass information media, and individuals may be recognised as foreign mass information media carrying out the functions of a foreign agent.

“Yarova’s law”, adopted in 2016, stiffens the punishment for terrorism and extremism and obligates operators to hold on to personal data, including voice calls and written correspondence (photo, audio, voice messages) for 6 months and to furnish them if necessary to the special services. Likewise, the law obligates organisers of the dissemination of information on the internet (messaging services, social networks, and other services) to decode users’ messages upon the demand of the FSB and to furnish keys to encrypted traffic. In April 2018, a series of unsuccessful attempts to block the Telegram social network was undertaken under this law. On June 18, 2020, a decision was adopted to unblock Telegram.

On March 29, 2019, a law entered into force prohibiting the dissemination of fake news and the insulting of representatives of the authorities in the media and internet. The Law on Fake News is being actively used by the authorities against journalists in the period of coverage of the COVID-19 pandemic. Besides that, as of April 1, Article 207.1 “Public dissemination of knowingly false information about circumstances representing a threat to the life and safety of citizens” appeared in the Criminal Code. It too is widely used against media workers covering the topic of the pandemic in Russia.

In November 2019, a law on the “sovereign internet”, adopted by the State Duma, entered into force, prescribing the creation of a national internet traffic routing system. Besides this, it allows Roskomnadzor to take providers’ channels under control and block websites by itself.

At the end of 2019, a law was signed that allows “foreign agent mass information media” to be fined in a sum of up to 5 million roubles, as well as for individuals to be arrested for the creation or dissemination of the publication of such mass information media for a term of up to 15 days.

In February 2020, the register of mass information media carrying out the functions of a “foreign agent” includes 12 media portals, including Voice of America, Nastoyashcheye vremya, and Radio Liberty and its subdivisions.

In January 2020, the Ministry of Justice likewise [proposed](#) introducing an amendment to the Code of Administrative Offences under which it will be possible to issue fines for dissemination of the materials of publications not registered in Russia as mass information media (including foreign ones), as well as for reposts of their publications.

On July 11, 2020, for the first time, a Russian journalist was issued a warning on account of cooperation with foreign media outlets – the Polish channel Belsat – without Foreign Ministry accreditation. This journalist became Roman Yanchenko, a resident of the city of Kemerovo. Such a practice, particularly against journalists working with the Belsat television channel, is widespread in neighbouring Belarus.

In moments of political flare-ups, the authorities restrict the population’s access to the internet. The most recent examples:

- ▶ rallies in Ingushetia against the transfer of a part of the Republic’s territory to Chechnya in the autumn of 2018 and the spring of 2019;
- ▶ protest actions in Moscow in the summer of 2019;
- ▶ rallies demanding repeal of the results of the mayoral election in the capital of Buryatia in September 2019;
- ▶ protests against the construction of a rubbish tip (dump) in Shiyes (Arkhangelsk Oblast) in October 2019.

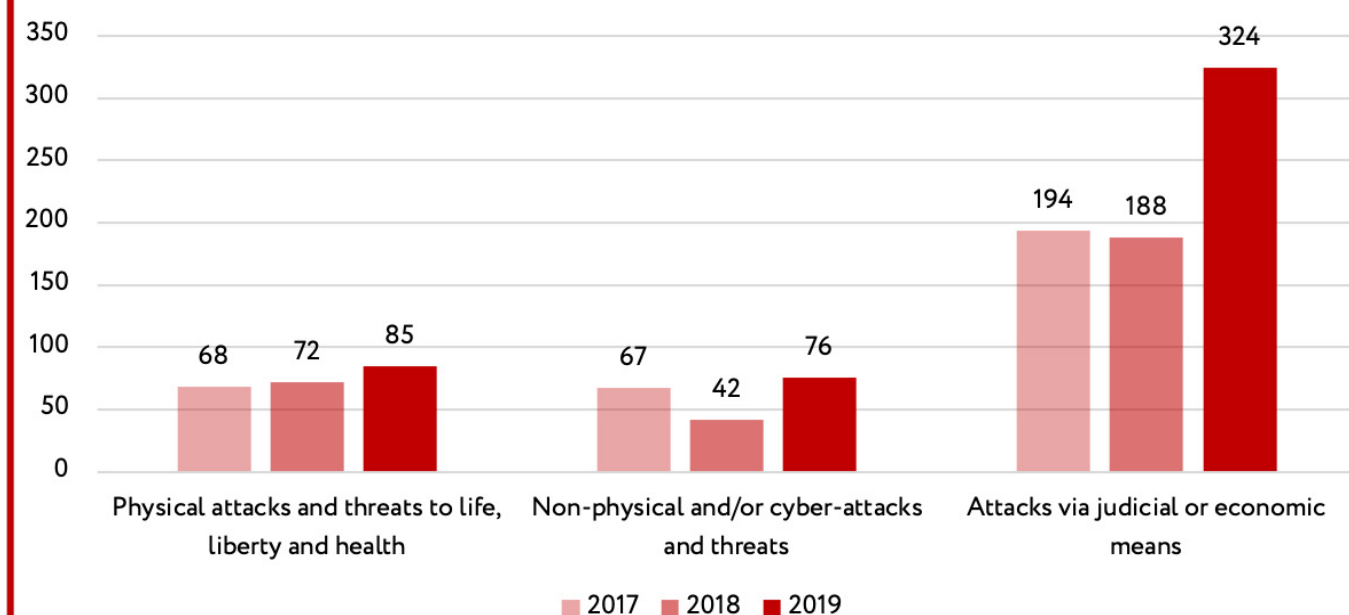
3/ GENERAL ANALYSIS OF ATTACKS

The job of a Russian journalist is associated with elevated risks to life, health, and liberty: 1,116 assaults on journalists have been recorded over the three years being analyzed in this study. One fifth of all the attacks (225 incidents) fall into the category of physical assaults. A minimum of 15 Russian media workers have lost their lives in these three years. In 2019, the number of physical assaults on journalists increased by a quarter compared to 2017.

The bulk (63%) of all attacks against journalists in Russia consists of attack via judicial and economic means, above all short-term detentions at mass demonstrations, as well as the initiation of criminal and administrative cases against professional and citizen media workers. In 2019, the number of attacks of this type increased by 67% compared to 2017.

Bullying, intimidation, and threats of reprisals lead the way among the sub-types of non-physical attacks. Coming up behind them are damage to and seizure of vehicles, equipment, and documents. Cyber-, DDoS, and hacker attacks round out the first troika of attacks and threats of a non-physical nature. As is the case in the other post-Soviet regions in this study, journalists regard threats and attacks of a non-physical nature as a commonplace component of their everyday work and do not make these incidents public.

Figure 1: Attacks on journalists, bloggers and media workers in Russia:
2017-2019



In 68% of the cases, the source of the attacks on journalists are representatives of the authorities, first and foremost the police. Short-term detention and arrest are far from the only ways of exerting influence that the authorities have in their arsenal. Often, the assaults are of a comprehensive, or “package”, nature: a journalist is detained short-term, beaten, and subjected to interrogation and search, and pressure is exerted on his or her loved ones, after which an administrative or criminal case is initiated, and the journalist is tried and convicted and sentenced to deprivation of liberty.

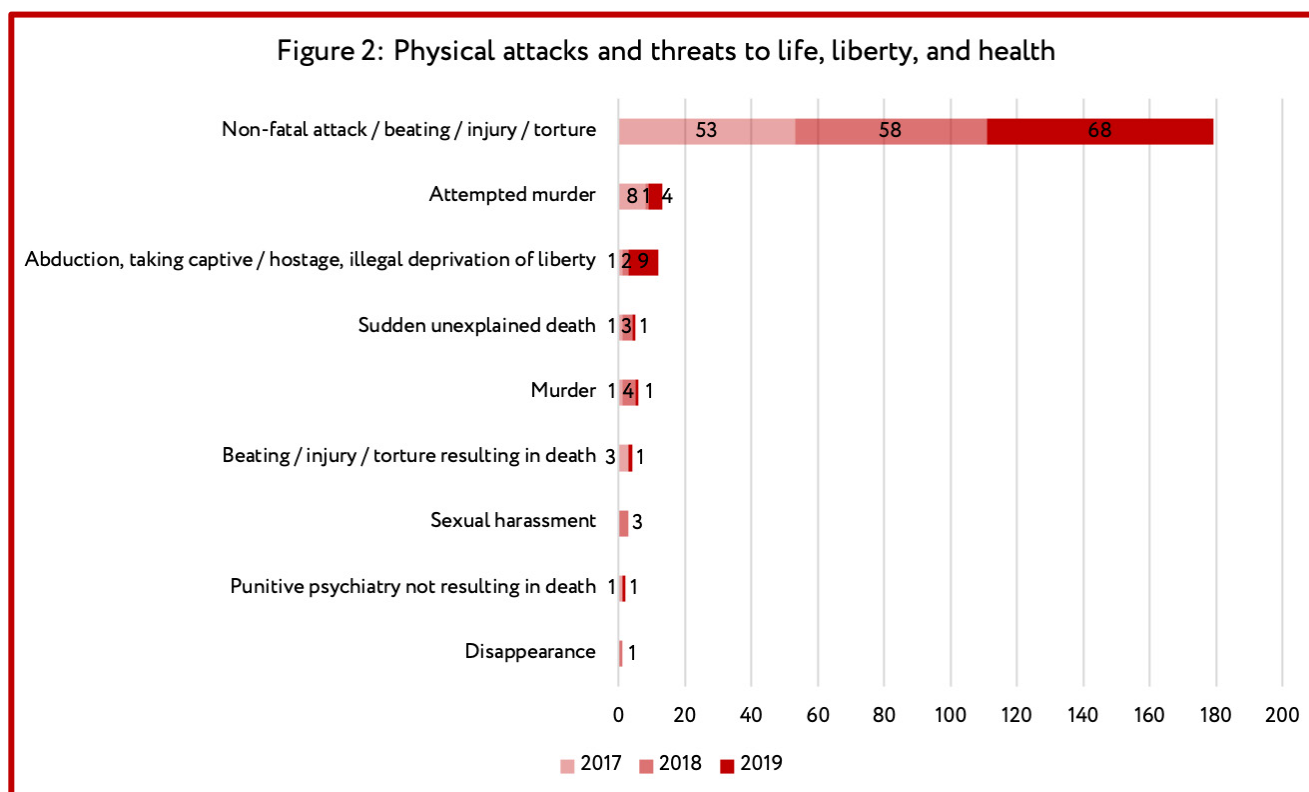
The most dangerous region for by a journalist is Moscow, where one third of all the attacks on media workers recorded during the study period took place. The risk of being attacked in the capital is 2.95 compared to 0.77 for Russia as a whole (the risk index calculated based on the number of attacks per 100 thousand people). The number of attacks in regions of elevated risk for media workers looks as follows:

- Moscow – 369
- Saint Petersburg – 85
- Sverdlovsk Oblast – 50
- Krasnodar Kray – 45
- Moscow Oblast – 44
- Republic of Ingushetia – 24
- Republic of Daghestan – 22

Only some examples of the most prevalent sub-categories of attacks on media workers are cited in the report. More detailed information with respect to each incident of assault can be found on the [Media Risk Map](#) on the Justice for Journalists Foundation website.

4 / PHYSICAL ATTACKS AND THREATS TO LIFE, LIBERTY, AND HEALTH

Figure 2: Physical attacks and threats to life, liberty, and health



DEATHS

For Russian media workers, the risk of losing one's life remains very high. During the period studied, a minimum of 15 journalists lost their lives as the result of murders, beatings, suicides, and accidents. The cause of death often remains unestablished, and the circumstances surrounding the death are not investigated, while the criminal cases are closed for lack of evidence or for other reasons.

- ▶ On March 16, 2017, 35-year-old journalist Yevgeny Khamaganov, editor of the AsiaRussiaDaily website and the founder of the SNB [Site of the Buryat People] internet portal, died in a hospital in Ulan-Ude. According to official data, the journalist died in intensive care as a result of a diabetic coma. Khamaganov's friends, who were not aware that he had diabetes, suspect that the reason for the journalist's death could have been yet another assault on him. The previous assault on the journalist was committed in June 2015, when Khamaganov's head was smashed and his neck vertebrae fractured.
- ▶ On April 19, 2017, 73-year-old Nikolai Andrushchenko, author for the newspaper Noviy Peterburg [New Petersburg], died in Saint Petersburg's Mariinsky Hospital. He had been brought there on March 9 with a severe head injury. The journalist, who had been working on anti-corruption investigations, died a few weeks later without ever regaining consciousness.
- ▶ On April 14, 2018, Maxim Borodin, an investigative journalist who wrote about hot-button issues, died in Yekaterinburg. He fell out of the window of his fifth-floor flat; three days later he died without regaining consciousness. The previous assault on Borodin had been committed on November 10, 2017: unknown assailants had hit him on the head with an iron pipe after the journalist had given an interview to the Rain television channel about his investigation in relation to admirers of the emperor Nicholas II and Natalia Poklonskaya called "The Sect of the Tsar-Deifiers".

- On July 30, 2018, cameraman Kirill Radchenko, director Alexandr Rastorguyev, and war correspondent Orkhan Dzhemal, who were investigating the activities of the Wagner Group in the Central African Republic, were murdered in that country. This crime is yet to be solved, and those responsible have not been located. Data from independent investigative journalism conducted by the [Dossier Center](#) and [Project](#) was ignored by the official investigation.
- On July 13, 2019, the body of a well-known television cameraman, 55-year-old Pyotr Mikov, who worked with LenTV, 100 TV, and «78», as well as in the socio-political show Open Studio, was found on Vasilyevsky Island in St. Petersburg. The victim's head had been shot through. Found next to the body was a shell casing from a pistol which, according to the investigation data, was not related to the murder.
- On July 17, 2019, 35-year-old local journalist, blogger, director of the Gorizont (Horizon) political-information technology agency, and author of the Telegram channel "Komitet" Mikhail Kurakin died in Togliatti (Samara Oblast). The day before his death, he wrote in Facebook: "I don't know why, but it seems that I've got serious problems". A criminal case was initiated in connection with his death under the "incitement to suicide" article of the Criminal Code; it was closed in half a year for the reason of the impossibility of identifying the person who had incited the person to kill himself.
- The editor of the independent online newspaper Volgogradsky reporter, 35-year-old Leonid Makhinya, disappeared without a trace in June 2018. Searches conducted by the police, volunteers and the journalist's relatives and friends have yet to yield any results. A murder criminal case has been opened in connection with his disappearance.

ATTEMPTED MURDERS

13 attempted murders were recorded during the period studied, including:

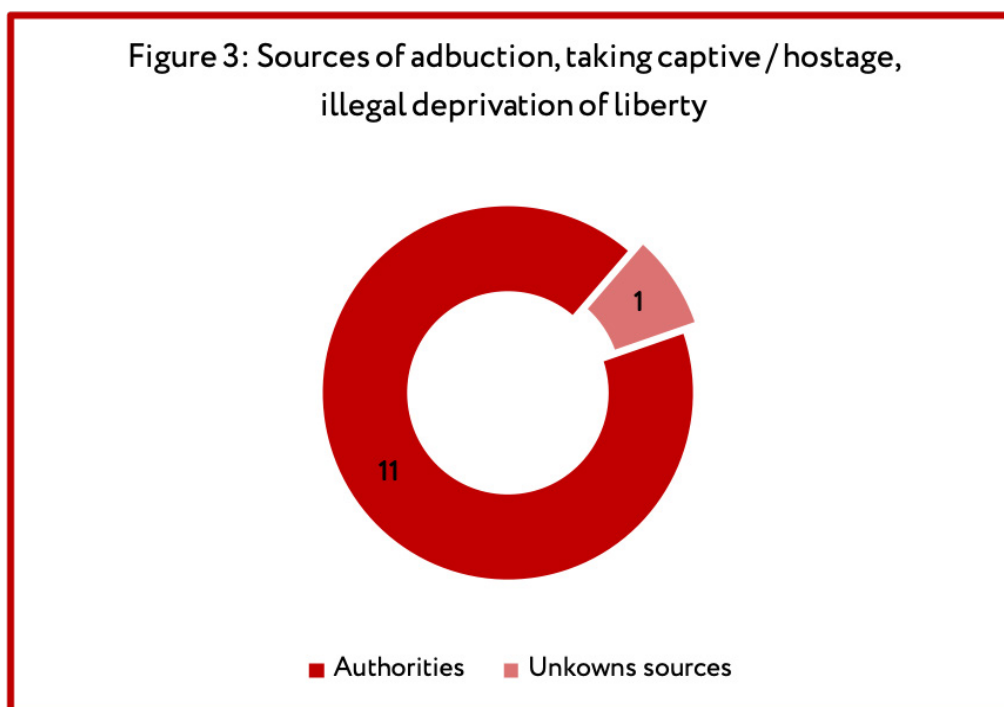
- On February 2, 2017, television journalist and coordinator of the Open Russia movement Vladimir Kara-Murza, Jr. was hospitalised in Moscow with symptoms of poisoning. This was the second attempt to poison Kara-Murza, the first having been in 2015. In both cases he was diagnosed with a "toxic effect from an unidentified substance".
- On October 23, 2017, Ekho Moskvyy presenter Tatiana Felgenhauer was assaulted at her workplace. The offender, later declared mentally incompetent, broke into the radio station building and wounded the journalist in the throat with a knife.
- On December 21, 2017, Caucasian Knot journalist Vyacheslav Prudnikov was wounded by gunfire in an armed attack in Rostov Oblast. Prudnikov links the attack with his professional activities at Caucasian Knot: "I got my camera out to take some pictures. Suddenly a grey imported car pulled up. A young person jumped out of it, demanding that I tell him what I was doing. A conflict arose, the man was trying to hit me, and after that he pulled out a pistol."
- On September 11, 2018, Pussy Riot participant and Mediazona publisher Pyotr Verzilov was admitted to a Moscow hospital in a critical condition after being poisoned. He was working on investigating the deaths of Russian journalists in the CAR.
- On March 14, 2019, a felonious attempt with the use of a firearm was committed against coordinator of the netproject Boris Ushakov in the city of Vladimir. Ushakov had earlier on numerous occasions exposed sadists, and had at a press conference recounted the details of a number of reprisals against prisoners in institutions of the Federal Penitentiary Service [FSIN] Administration for Vladimir Oblast.
- On June 1, 2019, Krasnodar blogger Vadim Kharchenko suffered three gunshot wounds and two knife wounds, as well as head injuries, in the course of a rendezvous with a source. The day before, an unknown person had scheduled a meeting for him and had promised to hand over evidence of how his colleagues in one of the city's Interior Ministry police stations are falsifying narcotics trafficking criminal cases, beating short-term detainees, and planting prohibited substances on them.

- On December 8, 2019, in Chelyabinsk, production editor of the Obshchestveniy zashchitnik [Public Defender] newspaper and website Yulia Zyabrina was shot in the head in the yard of her house – in her words, from an air gun. Earlier, the newspaper where she works had been receiving threats from unknown persons with promises to “take care of things”. Police refused to initiate a criminal case in connection with the journalist’s statement about her attempted murder. Sources in the Interior Ministry’s Main Administration for Chelyabinsk Oblast were later asserting that the story about the attempted murder had been made up.

ABDUCTION, TAKING DEPRIVATION OF LIBERTY

CAPTIVITY/HOSTAGE,

ILLEGAL



As paradoxical as this may sound, journalists are illegally deprived of liberty and abducted by employees of law enforcement agencies and special services. Such incidents have been recorded during the period examined in the study in Moscow, Solnechnogorsk, Volgograd, Tomsk, Nazran and Grozny.

- On January 4, 2018, Vladimir Arsentiev, an author for the newspaper of regional human rights organisations Za prava cheloveka [For Human Rights], was stopped by highway police employees, who called a tow truck, took the keys to his car, and drove the journalist himself off to a police station. He was only released 48 hours later.

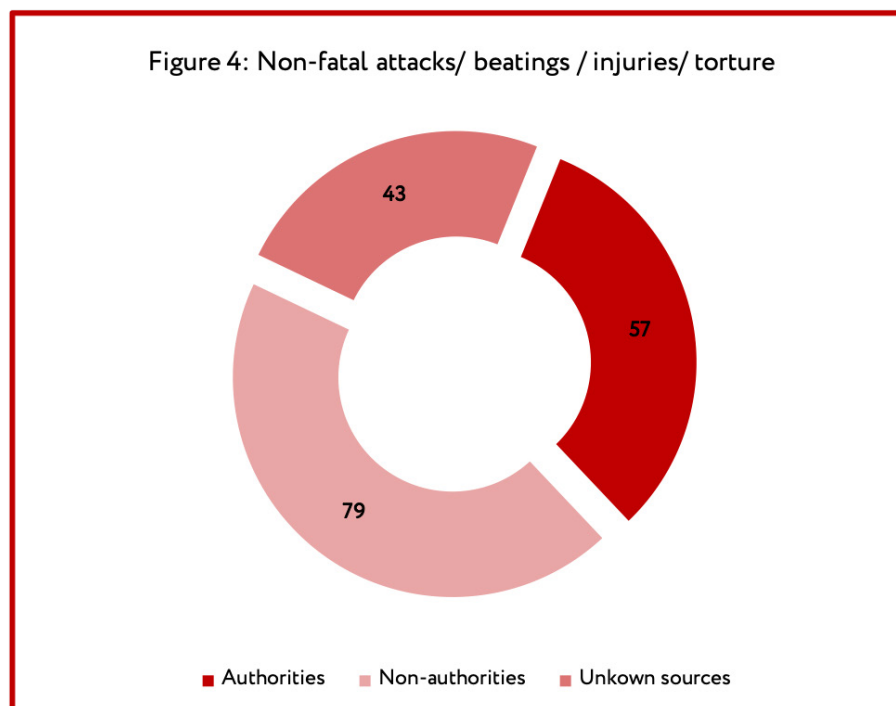
Often, the illegal deprivation of liberty of media workers is a part of “package attacks” on journalists, which lead to their arrest, conviction, and long imprisonment. In a number of cases, these attacks are associated with torture and a whole range of flagrant violations of journalists’ rights and Russian Federation laws.

- On June 23, 2017, the host of a YouTube channel about NGOs, Alexandr Batmanov, was forcibly brought in “for a talk” to the Soviety Rayon police station in Volgograd. The police spoke with him and were about to let him go, but after some kind of discussions with the prosecutor’s office they decided to “leave it till Monday.” Batmanov was locked up in one of the police station offices without food or water on Saturday and Sunday. Attempting to escape, he fell from the third floor and shattered both heels. He was then arrested, operated on in a prison hospital, officially charged, and tried. The court found him guilty of stealing a sausage and sentenced him to 2 years and 1 month in a strict-regime prison colony.
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- On November 1, 2019, Islam Nukhanov, who has diminished hearing and vision, was abducted in Grozny for a video posted by him on the YouTube video hosting platform entitled "How Kadyrov and his associates live. Part 1." Nukhanov had filmed fences and palaces in the centre of Grozny with a car's dashboard camera. In prison, the vlogger, who at 27 years of age weighs barely over 50 kg, was subjected to beatings and torture. Officially, Nukhanov is charged with illegal possession of a weapon and the use of violence against a policeman.

NON-FATAL ATTACKS/ BEATINGS / INJURIES/ TORTURE



Beatings continue to remain the most prevalent way of exerting influencing on journalists, with 179 incidents recorded in three years. The attacks of this category are conducted not only by authorities, but also by others as well.

Journalists are exposed to the greatest risk of physical attack from the police, special forces [OMON], and Federal Penitentiary Service [FSIN] employees in the course of:

- work covering protest actions
- in pre-trial detention

A number of examples are given in the **Attacks via judicial and/or economic means** section.

Media workers are likewise regularly subjected to physical assaults by unknown perpetrators who are not representatives of the authorities, for example security guards, vendors, business owners, and simply aggressive groups of inebriated people. As a rule, this happens when the journalists are trying to film stories about conflict situations in shopping centres, restaurants, shops, and medical clinics, and at railway stations and construction sites. Often, the subjects of the news stories themselves physically impede the carrying out of editorial tasks by the journalists: they take away microphones, smash cameras, and either threaten or commit violence. Further examples are given in the **Non-physical and/or cyber-attacks and threats** section.

- On July 27, 2017, the editor of the Lichnoye mnenie [Personal Opinion] website, Anver Yumagulov, was assaulted in Ufa. A thick-set 35-40 year old man approached him asking for help pushing his car. On the way to the vehicle, he assaulted the journalist. At the hospital to which the victim was taken, he was diagnosed with broken ribs, nose, and jaw.
- On November 21, 2017 in Lipetsk, hooligans assaulted journalists from the Lipetskoye Vremya [Lipetsk Time] television channel. The incident took place in the Moskva shopping centre, whilst the television crew were filming scenes for the morning programme. Two drunk patrons did not like the filming and assaulted the journalists. Correspondent Anton Palchikov was hit in the face; cameraman Valery Faustov was diagnosed with a facial bone fracture.
- On March 18, 2018 in Makhachkala, RIA Derbent journalist Malik Butayev, who was covering the elections, was assaulted by Mahomed Mahomedrasulov, an employee of the Lenin Rayon Administration. Butayev was not only performing his professional activities, he was also registered as a member of the electoral commission with advisory voting rights.
- On March 18, 2018, in the village of Duvanovka in Omsk Oblast, the head of a precinct electoral commission, Yuri Borzilo, refused entry into the polling station to Natalia Yakovleva, a journalist from the publication V Omske [In Omsk], and her colleague from the newspaper Chetverg [Thursday], Irina Krayevskaya. Later, when the journalists started talking to people, Borzilo ran up and started threatening them: "If you want to leave here alive get rid of the camera!" After this he hit the journalist in the head.
- On May 25, 2019, the head of Shirinsky Rayon in Khakassia, Sergei Zaitsev, assaulted Ivan Litomin, a correspondent for the Rossiya 24 television channel. Zaitsev was speaking to the camera crew in a raised voice, and then, having attempted to rip the microphone from Litomin's hands, he grabbed him and threw him roughly to the ground shouting "I told you to get out of here".
- On April 26, 2019, Valentin Gorshenin, a journalist for the REN TV television channel, was at the scene of a breaking news incident in Shchelkovo in Moscow Oblast: a man had barricaded himself in a high-rise building and was threatening to blow it up. A medical worker with the psychiatric aid team demanded that the journalist identify himself and show his accreditation. In the end, the medical worker took away the documents from the correspondent, beat him up, and smashed a professional camera worth 350 thousand roubles [around 5,000 US dollars].

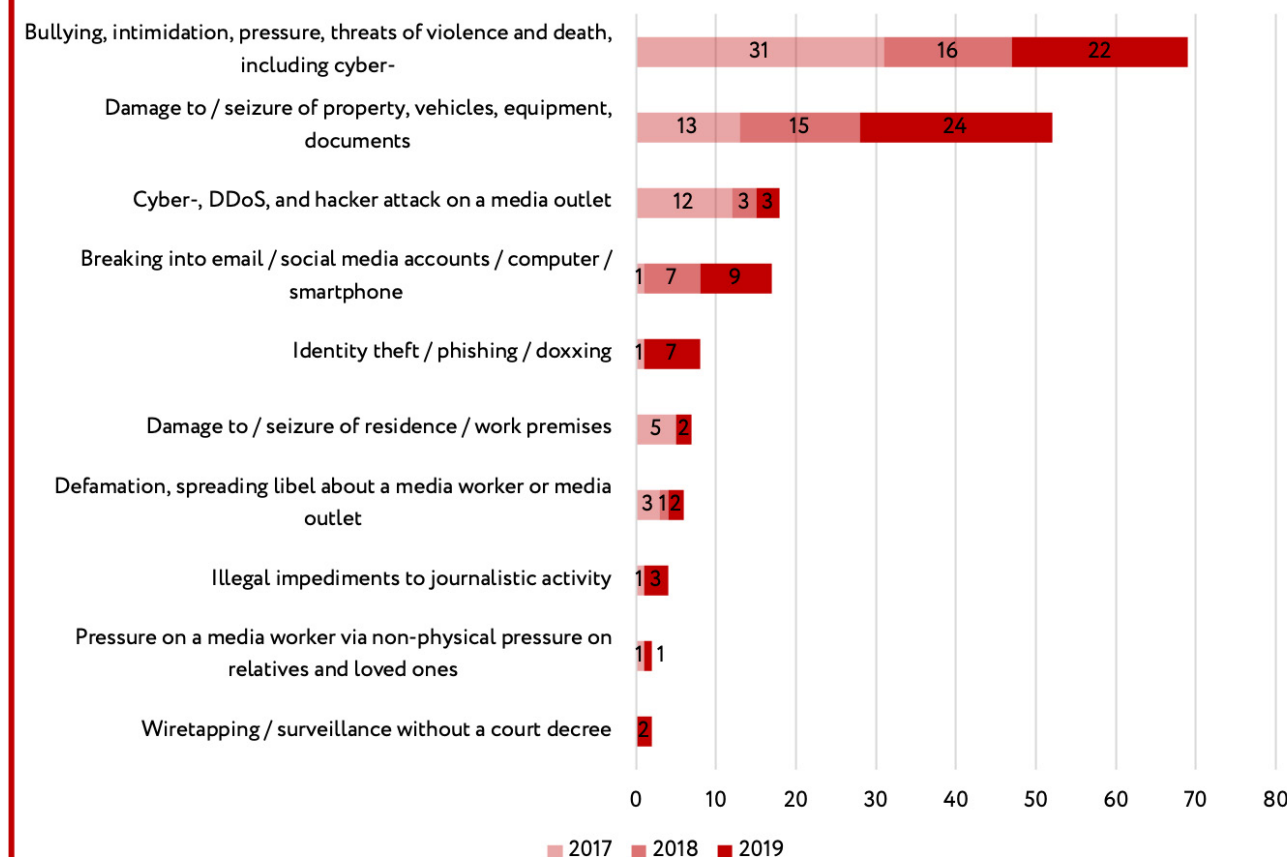
5/ **NON-PHYSICAL AND/OR CYBER-ATTACKS AND THREATS**

Verbal bullying, seizure of property, damage to equipment, cyber-attacks, and breaking into social network accounts and emails are perceived by the majority of journalists working in Russia as an unavoidable part of their everyday professional activity. Such incidents are rarely made public – this explains their relatively low percentage among recorded attacks.

BULLYING, INTIMIDATION, PRESSURE, THREATS OF VIOLENCE AND DEATH

Media workers regularly receive both personal threats of violence and death and threatening text messages by telephone and through the internet. Verbal warnings are regularly followed by real physical assaults.

Figure 5: Non-physical and/or cyber-attacks and threats



- In August 2017, the Krasnodar journalist Andrey Koshik received a number of telephone and text-message threats with a demand to “cease writing about Rostov.” Text messages with foul language, containing threats of physical reprisals and insults, were being received from a number that the journalist did not recognise. One of the people threatening Koshik by telephone identified himself as an agent of Rostov’s Centre for Combating Extremism.
- On November 5, 2017, after the short-term detention of Gradus TV correspondent Vladimir Putilin in Moscow for violating the procedure for holding a demonstration and his subsequent interrogation, someone in a separate office, who identified himself as an employee of the «E» Centre, was threatening the journalist with a criminal case under the “extremist” article of the Criminal Code. After this, Putilin began receiving threats from people wearing civilian clothing. And three days after he had refused to talk to them, he regained consciousness in hospital with serious injuries and loss of memory. “At the police, they said that I had fallen from a platform. If I had merely fallen, I would hardly have gotten such injuries, on all sides of the body. I’ve got bruises on the arms, my back is all lacerated, my head is smashed, and my thigh bone is broken...”
- On February 5, 2018 in Yekaterinburg, Alexey Kuznetsov, the host of a YouTube channel dedicated to the problem of torture in Russian prison colonies, reported about threats that had been addressed to him. Upon returning home, he had discovered a note that demanded in crude language that he delete a video and “start minding your own business”. “You have children too, take care of your family and your daughter”, the note stated.
- On June 25, 2018, Rostov journalist Anna Lebedeva pulled the latest of many anonymous letters from her post box, this one containing threats of physical reprisal: “You filthy scum and viper you better keep your eyes open before a brick falls on your head” [punctuation sic].
- On March 16, 2019, the speaker of the Chechen parliament, Mahomed Daudov (aka ‘Lord’), recorded a video message addressed to the Chechen blogger Tumso Abdurakhmanov, in which he announced a blood vendetta against him. Daudov’s reaction came after the blogger had

called Akhmat Kadyrov a traitor to the Chechen people.

- In August 2019, Vitaly Beshpalov, editor-in-chief of the Parni PLUS website in St. Petersburg, received an emailed letter with threats signed by the homophobic group Pila against LGBT. He was given an ultimatum in the text: kill photographer Maxim Lapunov, who had reported on torture in a “secret prison for gays” in Chechnya, before October 1, 2019. The anonymous authors of the letter otherwise threatened reprisal against Vitaly himself by the end of the year.

DAMAGE TO/SEIZURE OF PROPERTY, VEHICLES, EQUIPMENT, DOCUMENTS

Such attacks on media workers mostly occur concurrently with beatings of journalists in the course of their work on news stories. As a rule, the attackers try to break audio and video recording equipment and/or a telephone and to take away documents. Media workers’ means of transportation are regularly damaged as well.

- On June 12, 2017, during an anti-corruption rally by supporters of Alexei Navalny in Moscow, a man assaulted Caucasian Knot correspondent Patimat Mahmudova and broke her video camera.
- On December 17, 2017, RIA Daghestan special correspondent Jemal Aliyev was beaten in Moscow. The moment of the attack was captured on street CCTV security cameras. Aliyev was hit on the head several times and his bag, documents, and iPhone 7 were taken.
- On February 7, 2018, in Moscow, unknown persons assaulted the presenter of the Che channel’s television programme Reshala, Vladislav Chizhov, severely beating him. The assailants knocked the journalist to the ground and hit him several times. One of the malefactors came up to Chizhov’s car and smashed the windscreen.
- On May 5, 2018, at the “He’s not our tsar” demonstration in Moscow, a Federal National Guard Troops Service member hit Vedomosti photographer Yevgeny Razumny with a baton and smashed his camera lens. The journalist was detained short-term but released after a while.
- On February 18, 2019, in Irkutsk, a cameraman for the Vesti-Irkutsk programme, Roman Vasyokhin, had his camera smashed, while correspondent Anastasia Tsygankova was grabbed and pushed down a staircase. This happened during the filming of a story about an encounter between disgruntled customers and representatives of the consumer lending co-operative Zolotoy Fond [Golden Fund].
- On June 11, 2019, in Perm, during filming of a story about a trial in a case about the illegal demolition of garages, a security guard tore a microphone from the hands of correspondent Larissa Strelnikova, ripped off its foam windscreen, and threw it away over a fence. On the footage shot by the television channel, a man in uniform can be seen pushing the journalist and hitting her in the face as she tries to shield herself with a microphone.

CYBER-, DDOS, AND HACKER ATTACKS AND BREAKING INTO SOCIAL NETWORK PAGES

As a rule, identifying the source of the threats in attacks of this kind is not a simple matter. Assaulters can be tracked down indirectly by cross-referencing the attacks with the publication of investigative materials or with an increase in opposition activity.

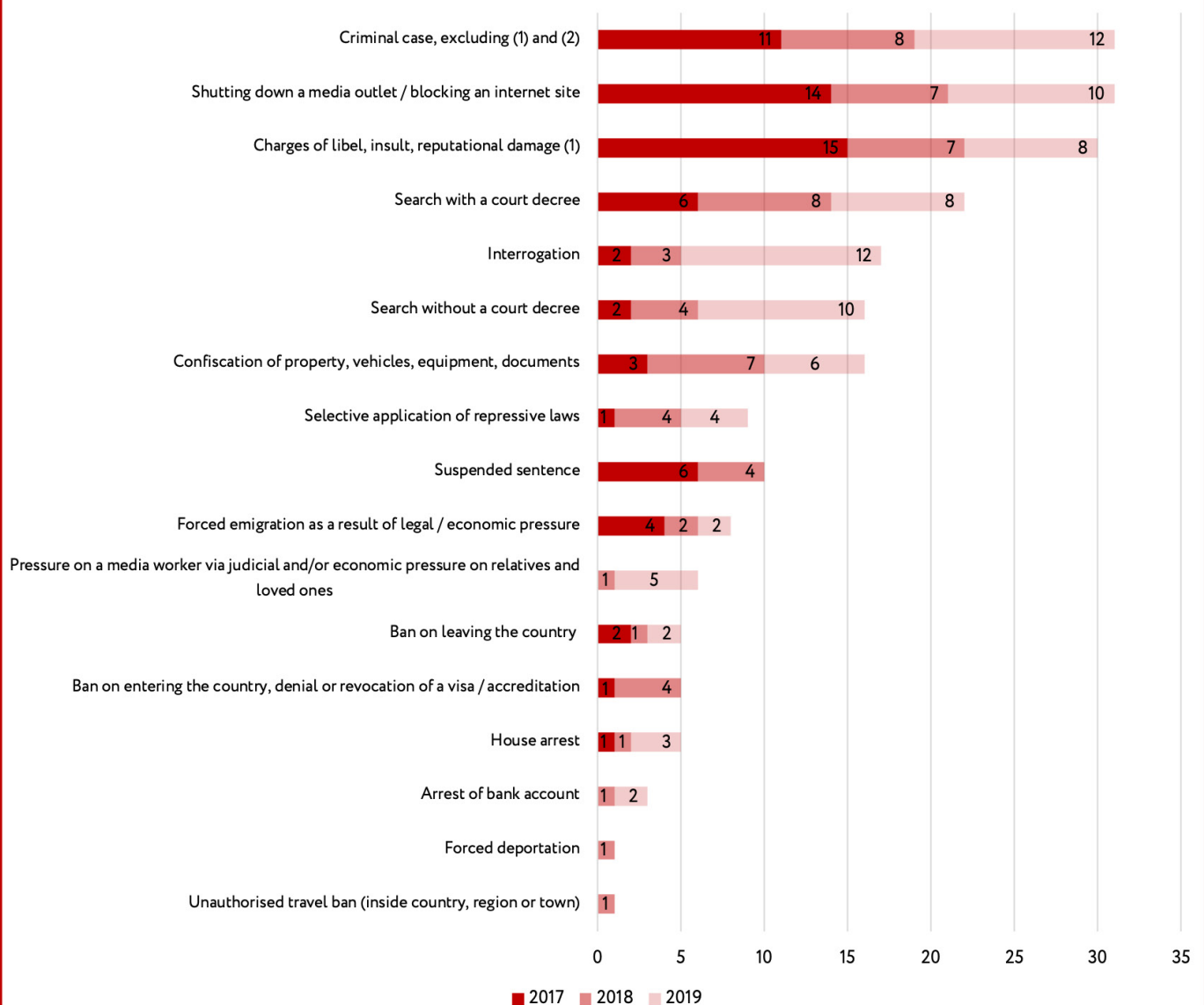
- In August 2018, seven journalists taking part in the work on the Moloko plus almanac noticed attempts to break into their Facebook and email accounts after an incident involving an assault and a visit by the police to a demonstrations against the construction of a church in a public garden in Yekaterinburg reported attempts to break into their Telegram accounts.
- In the summer of 2019, the anonymous Telegram channel “Tovarishch Mayor” [“Comrade Major”] published the personal data of approximately three thousand people, including those detained short-term at protest actions in Moscow on July 27 and August 3. The database has

the passport data and telephone numbers of four Mediazonajournalists -the police had written down the passport data of three of them before the August 3 demonstration. Also on the list are journalists from Radio Liberty and correspondents from Meduza, MBK media, Takiye dela, The Village, and Rain. Some of these were detained short-term during the protest actions at the beginning of June in connection with the case of journalist Ivan Golunov.

- In October 2019, journalists from the publication Proyeckt [Project] faced threats after they had begun working on articles about the activities of Russian mercenaries and political operatives in Africa and the Near East who were allegedly associated with businessman Yevgeny Prigozhin. The journalists were receiving “obscene, coarse, and unpleasant” threats of physical reprisals via email, asserts Proyeckt’s editor-in-chief Roman Attempts were also made to break into their Facebook, Telegram, and Google accounts.

6/ ATTACKS VIA JUDICIAL AND/OR ECONOMIC MEANS

Figure 6: Attacks via judicial or economic means



The predominant method of pressure on the media in Russia (63%) are attacks via judicial and economic means. In 2019, the number of attacks of this type increased compared to 2017 due to an increase in the number of journalists detained short-term at protest actions, and comprised 324 incidents.

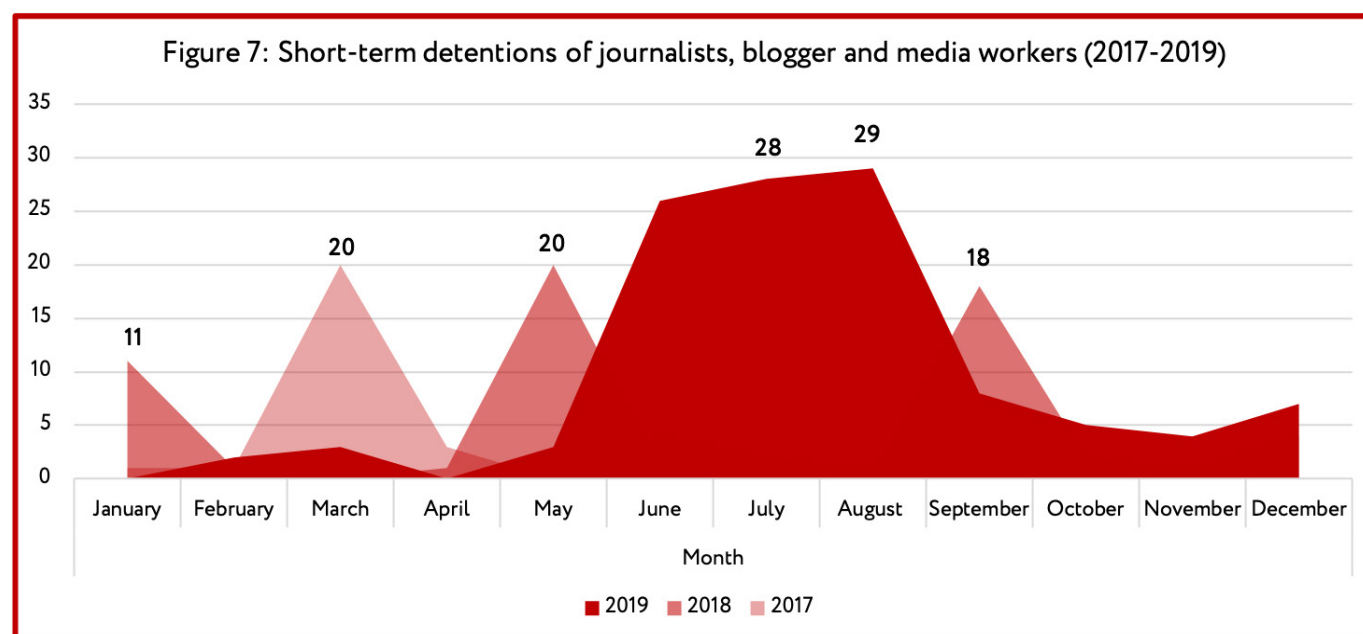
The principal source of attacks on journalists are representatives of the authorities, first and foremost police, who account for 68% of all assaults. During the period covered in this study, 211 instances of short-term detention of journalists without subsequent arrest were recorded, as were 33 arrests in criminal cases and administrative arrests, 5 instances of house arrest, and 5 bans on leaving the country.

Violence is regularly used during short-term detentions, arrests, searches, interrogations, and other procedural actions in relation to media workers, while their rights to protection and a fair trial are violated.

SHORT-TERM DETENTIONS

The number of media workers detained short-term increased fourfold in 2019 compared to 2017. This dynamic correlates with an increase in protest sentiments and an intensification of repressions by the authorities against journalists covering mass protests. The main high points of short-term detentions can be seen in Figure 7.

- ▶ On March 26, 2017, journalists covering anti-corruption protests in Russia were detained short-term in Moscow, Saint Petersburg, and Makhachkala.
- ▶ On May 5, 2018, the mass action “He’s not our tsar” was taking place, at which journalists were detained short-term in Moscow, Saint Petersburg, Yakutsk, Krasnoyarsk, and Chelyabinsk.
- ▶ On September 9, 2018, a demonstration against an increase in the pension age took place, at which journalists were subjected to short-term detentions, while some were beaten up.
- ▶ On June 7, 2019, solitary pickets took place in support of journalist Ivan Golunov of the publication Meduza.
- ▶ From July 27 to August 10, 2019, a series of demonstrations took place in Russia’s cities under the slogan “Let’s bring back our right to elections” and for the release of activists detained short-term in the “mass unrests” case: besides the actual demonstration participants, the police were detaining short-term and beating up representatives of the press.



ARRESTS, TRIALS, AND CRIMINAL CASES

The number of journalists placed in custody doubled in 2019 compared to 2017. Criminal cases against journalists are most often started up under one or several Criminal Code articles:

- ▶ extremism; links with terrorists; inciting hate (40 instances)
- ▶ libel, defamation, reputational damage (30 instances)
- ▶ extortion, embezzlement, fraud, possession of firearms, dealing narcotics (31 instances)

The case of Ivan Golunov, who was detained short-term on June 6, 2016 in the centre of Moscow, allowed the mechanisms of how evidence is falsified to be revealed, and likewise became one of the most vivid manifestations of “workplace solidarity”, thanks to which he was ultimately released. The special correspondent for the internet publication Meduza was detained short-term by several operatives who “discovered” a bundle with a narcotic substance in his backpack whilst searching him. Later, yet another bundle was seized during a search in Golunov’s flat. The journalist was charged with the illegal production, sale, or transportation of narcotic agents, psychotropic substances, or analogues thereof. Golunov was declaring that the narcotics had been planted on him, and that a video filmed in an underground narcotics laboratory had nothing to do with him. The investigator asked for Golunov to be sent to a pre-trial temporary detention “isolator” for two months; however, as a result of unprecedented public pressure, the Nikulinsky District Court of Moscow placed him under house arrest. Already on June 11, the criminal prosecution of the journalist was withdrawn, while a criminal case was initiated on charges of exceeding official authority in relation to the Interior Ministry employees who had been involved in Golunov’s case.

“THE GOLUNOV EFFECT”

It is noteworthy that within a few weeks of Ivan Golunov’s transfer to house arrest and the dropping of fabricated charges against him, several media workers in other regions were released from prisons or transferred to house arrest. Their lawyers and loved ones, astounded by such “humanity” from authorities, referred to it as the “Golunov effect”:

- ▶ On June 7, 2019, in Kabardino-Balkaria, police detained the activist, freelance journalist, and founder and chairman of the Circassian civic organisation Habze Martin Kochesoko short-term. Interior Ministry employees were asserting that they had found marijuana in his car. Kochesoko was taken to a police station, and after that to a pre-trial temporary detention “isolator” in Nalchik, where, under pressure from security personnel, he gave confessional testimony. On June 13, the journalist was transferred from the “isolator” to house arrest. On August 23, he was released.
- ▶ On June 17, 2019, Igor Rudnikov, editor and publisher of the Kaliningrad opposition newspaper *Noviye kolea* [New Wheels], who had been in custody for nearly two years on charges of extortion, was released in the courtroom. On November 1, 2017, he was beaten up by security personnel in the course of a storming of the editorial office building, arrested, and, in his words, subjected to torture and violence in custody, while his newspaper was shut down pursuant to a lawsuit filed by the Federal Service for Supervision in the Sphere of Telecom, Information Technologies, and Mass Communications [Roskomnadzor].
- ▶ On July 12, 2019, unknown persons in masks detained former editor of the opposition Ingush publication *FortangaRashid* Maysigov short-term. A search was conducted at his home, in the course of which a bag with a white powder was allegedly found. Nothing was known about the whereabouts of the short-term detainee over the course of 24 hours. In the words of his lawyer, law enforcement agency employees were torturing the journalist in Nazran’s prison. On November 19, Maysigov was transferred to house arrest.
- ▶ On September 10, 2019, the Vologda City Court ordered indemnification in an amount of 50 thousand roubles to be paid to local blogger Yevgeny Domozhirov, acquitted in a case of defamation and extremism. The court found the activist not guilty under the Criminal Code articles on incitement of hatred and defamation; however, it did order 60 hours of compulsory labour for insulting a policeman.

PRISON TERMS FOR BLOGGERS AND ONLINE ACTIVISTS FOR “INCITING HATE”, “EXTREMISM”, “TERRORISM” AND “REHABILITATION OF NAZISM”

The “Golunov effect” was short-lived, however. Law enforcement agencies closely monitor social networks and local media with the aim of identifying publications on the basis of which they subsequently initiate criminal cases. In the course of the investigations in these criminal cases, media workers and their loved ones are subjected to fierce pressure: searches, confiscation of documents and equipment, beatings, restriction or deprivation of liberty, arrest of bank accounts, and so on. What Russian bloggers and journalists need to fear most of all are prosecutions under the following articles of the Criminal Code:

Incitement of hate (Article 282 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation):

- ▶ In January 2018, the Magas District Court of Ingushetia sentenced Mahomed Khazbiyev, editor-in-chief of the Ingushetia.org website, to two years and 11 months of deprivation of liberty in a prison settlement colony, as well as a fine of 50 thousand roubles. Khazbiyev was found guilty of “inciting hate” for Ingushetia’s head Yunus-Bek Yevkurov, local authorities, and the law enforcement system, as well as of illegal possession of weapons.
- ▶ In September 2019, the Presnensky District Court of Moscow sentenced blogger Vladislav Sinitsa, who was being charged with inciting hate with the threat of violence (Part 2 of Article 282), to five years of deprivation of liberty for a tweet in which he allegedly was calling on subscribers to commit violence towards the children of security personnel.

Calls for extremist activity (Article 280 of the Criminal Code):

- ▶ In June 2018, the Toropetsky District Court of Tver Oblast issued a verdict in the case of Vladimir Yegorov, who was being charged with publicly calling for extremist activities on the internet. The opposition activist was found guilty and given a suspended sentence of two years of deprivation of liberty and three years of probation and banned from moderating websites. The court likewise ordered the removal of the CPU from his personal computer. Serving as the pretext for the prosecution was his post on the VKontakte network, which contained a photograph of Putin and text about how the propaganda controlled by the special services is aimed at absolving the head of state by shifting the blame for all of the authorities’ blunders onto other officials.

Public calls to carry out terrorist activity or public justification of terrorism committed via the media (Article 205, Part 2):

- ▶ On February 6, 2019, the Investigative Committee of Pskov Oblast opened up a criminal case against Svetlana Prokopieva. The pretext for opening the case became her op-ed on the Pskovskaya lenta novostey [Pskov News Feed] website, which was also read on the air on Ekho Moskvyy v Pskove [Ekho Moskvyy in Pskov]. The column was devoted to an analysis of the reason why 17-year-old Mikhail Zhlobitsky blew himself up in the Arkhangelsk Oblast FSB Administration building on October 31, 2018. Searches took place in the building where Prokopieva lives and at the Ekho Moskvyy v Pskove radio station editorial office; the journalist’s bank accounts were arrested.

Rehabilitation of nazism (Article 354 of the Criminal Code):

- ▶ In October 2018, in Cheboksary, a criminal case was opened against blogger Konstantin Ishutov for a photo of a Third Reich leaflet posted on Facebook. Ishutov is suspected of rehabilitation of nazism. The blogger was detained short-term on October 4, after which a search was conducted in his home and the computer from which the post had been uploaded was seized. As a measure of restraint, Ishutov was prohibited from leaving the house at night and using the internet.

Public acts expressing clear disrespect for society and committed with the aim of insulting the religious feelings of believers (Article 148 of the Criminal Code):

- In May 2017, the Verkh-Isetskiy Court of Yekaterinburg sentenced blogger Ruslan Sokolovsky (Saybaltalov) to a suspended three year six months deprivation of liberty for a video clip about chasing Pokémons in a church.

PROSECUTION FOR “LIBEL” AND “INSULTS”

Criminal libel and insult cases are used as a form of revenge for undesirable journalists and editorial boards, as well as to hush up inconvenient topics. The plaintiffs in such cases are most often policemen, highway police inspectors, government administration employees, governors, MPs, judges, and other civil servants. As a rule, these cases do not end in prison terms for the journalists, but they do provide grounds for searches, temporary deprivation of liberty, confiscations, and the use of other methods of pressuring media workers, up to and including their dismissal and large monetary fines.

Insulting representatives of the authorities (Article 319 of the Criminal Code):

- In January 2017, a court in Sochi partially ruled in favour of a claim filed by State Duma MP Yuri Napso for the protection of his honour and dignity against editor-in-chief of BlogSochi Alexandr Valov and one of the bloggers on this website, Vladimir Melnikov. 1.5 million roubles was recovered from the defendants.
- In May 2019, a court in Lipetsk found Pravda journalist Dmitry Pashinov guilty of insulting former deputy prosecutor of Lipetsk’s Oktyabrsky Rayon Andrey Padzhetnykh. The journalist spent 13 days in a pre-trial temporary detention “isolator”, even though the Criminal Code article on insulting a representative of the authorities does not prescribe holding the suspect in custody.

Libel contained in the media (Article 128 of the Criminal Code):

- In November 2018, police in Michurinsk detained MBK media journalist and editor of the Tambov publication Tverdiy Znak [Hard Sign] Stanislav Savonchik short-term, after which they drove him home to Tambov, where they conducted a search in a libel case. The claim against the journalist had been filed by the governor of Tambov Oblast, Alexandr Nikitin.
- In December 2018, Tatiana Igumentseva, editor of the newspaper Rodnaya Storona [Homeland] in Tarasov Rayon of Rostov Oblast, came under fierce pressure from local medical officials. The Rayon’s chief doctor filed a suit against the newspaper for its criticism of the work of the ambulance service and won the case despite the obvious facts: an inhabitant of one of the villages had died from a heart attack because an ambulance had not arrived in time. In May 2019, Igumentseva started to receive threats of physical reprisal and was forced to resign, and after that to leave the Rayon where she lived.

ATTACKS ON JOURNALISTS, BLOGGERS AND MEDIA WORKERS

UKRAINE

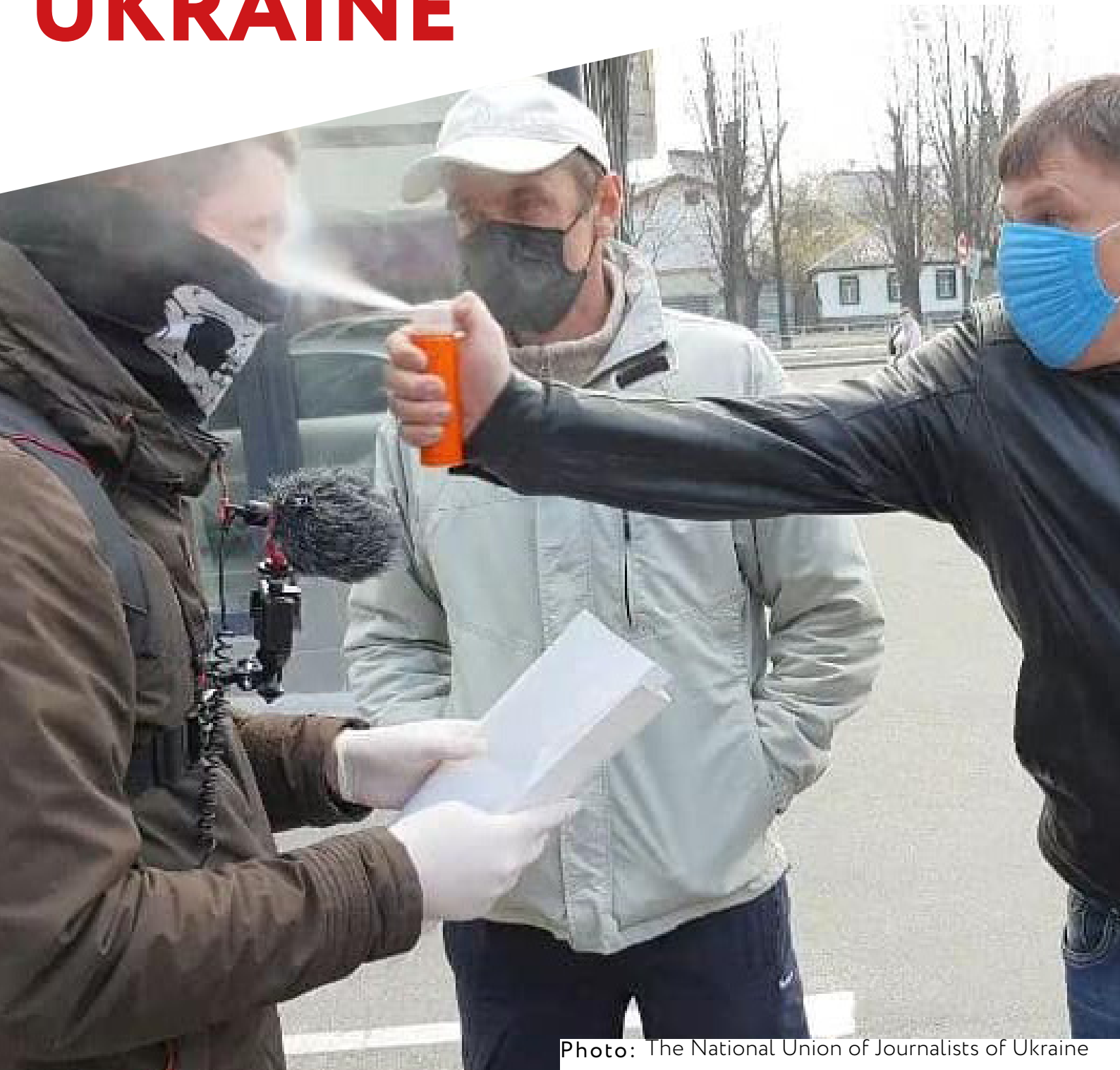


Photo: The National Union of Journalists of Ukraine

1/ KEY FINDINGS

868 instances of attacks/threats against professional and civilian media workers and the editorial offices of traditional and online publications in Ukraine were identified and analysed in the course of the study. The data were obtained from open sources in the Ukrainian, Russian and English languages using the method of content analysis. A list of the main sources is presented in Annex 4. The data of an expert survey of more than 200 injured media workers, carried out as part of the National Union of Journalists of Ukraine project “Physical Security Index” was also used in the report.

1. Ukraine is among those countries where physical attacks on media workers still remain widespread. In the period from 2017 to 2019, there were 239 recorded incidents of physical attacks in Ukraine; one journalist, Vadim Komarov, died of injuries sustained in a beating.
2. In 22% of the cases, the physical assaults on journalists were committed by representatives of the authorities, in 51% by ordinary citizens, and in the rest by unknown perpetrators.
3. The most widespread method of pressuring media workers that has received coverage in Ukraine’s traditional and digital media is non-physical and/or cyber-attacks and threats, above all bullying, intimidation, and threats of violence and death.
4. Ukrainian media workers regularly have to deal with identity theft.
5. Ukrainian authorities regularly use the mechanism of banning entry into the country to foreign journalists (predominantly Russian media) and forcibly deporting them.

That said, much of the information about various types of threats and attacks never finds its way into the media. Threats of a non-physical nature and non-lethal physical attacks occur so frequently that they are regarded by the majority of journalists working in Ukraine as an unavoidable part of their everyday professional activity, are not widely publicized, and do not become a cause for appealing to law-enforcement agencies for protection.

2/ THE MEDIA IN UKRAINE

According to the data of the National Council of Ukraine for Television and Radio Broadcasting, the following media outlets operate in Ukraine:

- ▶ Television companies – 27 nationwide, 47 satellite, and 183 regional
- ▶ Radio stations – 15 nationwide and 198 regional
- ▶ News agencies – 19 private and 1 state
- ▶ Print media – 3,143 publications, including 1,371 newspapers, of which only two are state-owned.

Internet penetration in Ukraine as of September 2019 comprised 71% (almost 23 million users, that is those who say they use the internet once a month or more).

The annexation of the Crimean Peninsula (March 2014) and the commencement of combat operations in the east of the country (April 2014) have left their mark on the media space in Ukraine. During the period from 2014 to 2019, the National Council on Television and Radio Broadcasting restricted broadcasting by 86 foreign channels, 74 of which had direct Russian ties. More than 400 Russian internet sites, including the largest social networks and e-mail services, were blocked by a number of presidential decrees.

In the territories of Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts as well as of Crimea that are not under Ukrainian government control, the population is severely restricted in terms of access to Ukrainian news sources. According to the data of the Ministry of Culture of Ukraine, as of 2020 54% of the people residing in the temporarily occupied territories do not have access to Ukrainian television channels, while 43% do not have access to Ukrainian internet sites. At the initiative of Ukraine's president Volodymyr Zelensky, a state entertainment-and-news television channel called Dom [Home], created for the residents of the temporarily occupied territories, went on the air in March 2020. The Ukrainian foreign-broadcasting television channel UATV was totally transformed for this purpose.

Ukraine's television market shows signs of a collective monopoly – more than 70% of assets are divided among six groups. The largest socio-political television channels belong to influential businessmen and politicians – Victor Pinchuk, Ihor Kolomoyskyi, Rinat Akhmetov, Dmytro Firtash, Viktor Medvedchuk, and Petro Poroshenko.

The oligarch Victor Pinchuk, owner of the pipeline company Interpipe and son-in-law of former president of Ukraine Leonid Kuchma, owns the largest television holding company, StarLightMedia, which has six television channels under its umbrella: ICTV, Novyi Kanal, STB, M1, M2, and the OCE channel. ICTV is the holding company's lead channel.

Ihor Kolomoyskyi's 1+1 Media holding company includes six channels, but the key one, and one of the most popular in Ukraine, is 1+1.

The Ukraina Media Group, owned by the wealthiest Ukrainian, Rinat Akhmetov, is one of the top television holding companies. His flagship television channel Ukraina has the highest ratings.

Inter is the key television channel in the InterMediaGroup of the oligarch Dmytro Firtash, who is awaiting a decision in Austria on extradition to the US on suspicion of corruption. Dmytro Firtash's minority partner in Inter is the opposition parliamentarian Serhiy Lyovochkin.

Three television news channels are under the influence of opposition politician and businessman Viktor Medvedchuk: 112, NewsOne, and ZIK. Their official owner is Medvedchuk's close political associate, the parliamentarian Taras Kozak.

Petro Poroshenko, the fifth president of Ukraine, officially owns news channel 5. Besides that, the television channel Pryamiy [Direct], created on the eve of the most recent presidential elections, provides political support for Poroshenko.

Ukraine ranked 96th out of 180 in the annual [World Press Freedom Index](#) of Reporters Without Borders in 2020.

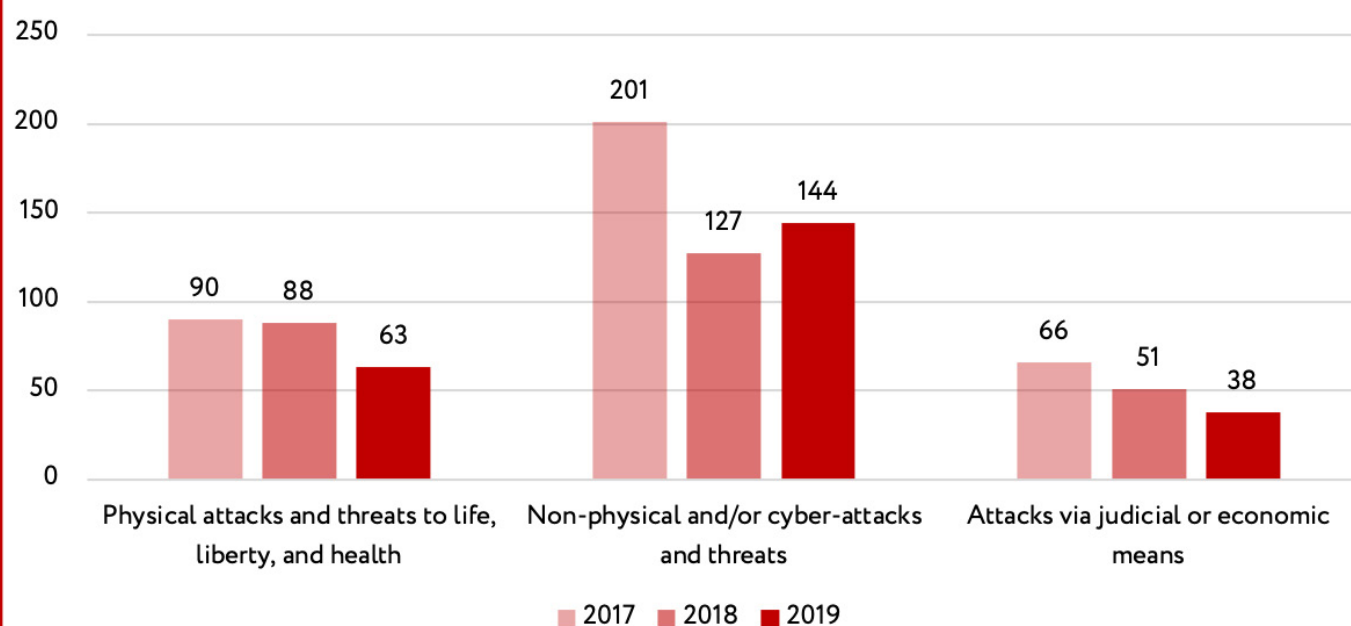
3 / GENERAL ANALYSIS OF ATTACKS

Figure 1 represents a quantitative analysis of the three main types of attacks against journalists, bloggers, and media workers on the territory of Ukraine in the period from 2017 through 2019.

The number of physical attacks fell by almost a third from 2017 through 2019. The number of attacks via judicial and/or economic means shrank by nearly half. The fight by the National Union of Journalists of Ukraine, as well as by civic activists, to increase the level of safety for journalistic activity and against impunity for perpetrators was one of the factors behind these improved figures.

However, the number of non-physical and/or cyber-attacks and threats began to rise once again in 2019 after an insignificant decline in 2018.

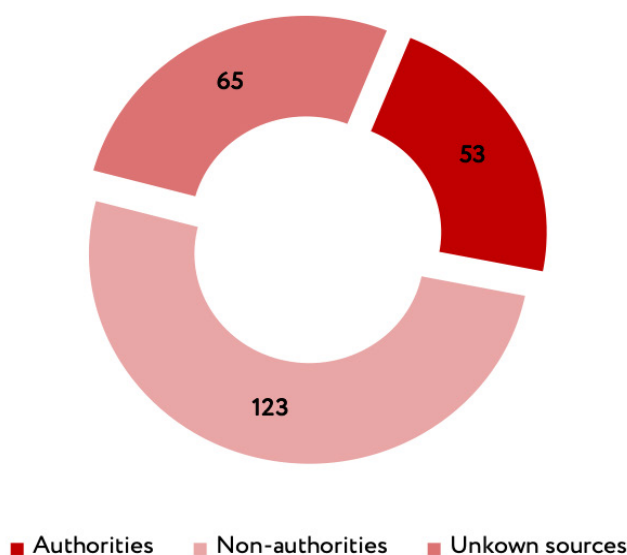
Figure 1: Attacks on journalists, bloggers and media workers in Ukraine:
2017-2019



4/ PHYSICAL ATTACKS AND THREATS TO LIFE, LIBERTY, AND HEALTH

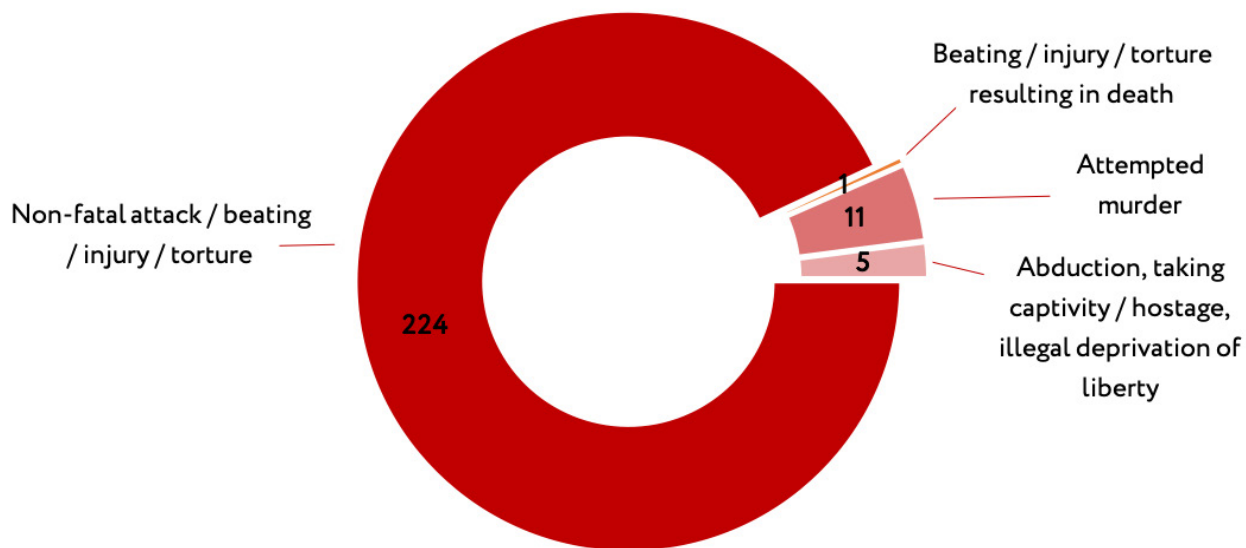
As shown in Figure 2, representatives of the authorities initiated attacks in only one fourth of the incidents, while the greater part of the assaults were committed by ordinary citizens or unknown persons.

Figure 2: Physical attacks and threats to life, liberty, and health



A large number of non-fatal attacks, beatings, and woundings of journalists in Ukraine can be explained not only by the combat operations in the east of the country, but also by the complete impunity enjoyed by the perpetrators of these crimes irrespective of the region of the country in which they have taken place. Despite a solid legislative framework to ensure the security of press activity, Ukrainian journalists encounter total inaction and indifference on the part of law-enforcement agencies and judicial authorities.

Figure 3: Sub-categories of physical attacks and threats to life, liberty, and health



This is confirmed by official data obtained by the National Union of Journalists of Ukraine from judicial bodies. In 2018, there were 39 cases brought against attackers of journalists before the courts of Ukraine. But only 11 cases were actually heard by a court in that entire year, and only 5 got as far as the verdict stage. Of these, one verdict was an acquittal, while four cases were closed because the statute of limitations had expired. The situation did not improve in 2019: only 10 out of 48 cases came to trial.

- The most high-profile crime in this category was the murder of a regional investigative journalist, Vadim Komarov, in the city of Cherkassy. He was beaten up by unknown persons in May 2019, and remained in a coma right up until his death on June 20th. It is noteworthy that Komarov had already been assaulted on previous occasions, but these crimes had never been solved. This crime is still under investigation and the perpetrators have not been found.
- On May 7, 2019, the television cameraman Vadim Makaryuk came to harm whilst filming a dispute near one of the shopping centres in the city of Kharkiv. The instigators of the dispute with local businesspeople – a group of armed and aggressively disposed young people – assaulted the journalist as well. He was brutally beaten; his camera was smashed, and the memory card with material on it was taken. Vadim ended up in intensive care, and doctors fought long to save his life. The journalist is facing many long months of rehabilitation. The police identified the suspects and in December 2019 submitted the case to court for trial.
- The case of the beating of Roman Varshanidze, the editor of the publication Naddnestranskyaya Pravda, can serve as an example of the ineffective working of the judicial system. On August 25, 2017 in Odessa Oblast, assailants barricaded the way to his home with tree branches, and when

Varshanidze came out to remove them, three people assaulted him and began to strike him with bats. Police officers quickly established the identity of the suspects and detained them short-term. To this day, however, the case remains tied up in court. The perpetrators never have been punished.

According to monitoring data from the Index on Physical Security of Journalists of Ukraine (a project of the National Union of Journalists of Ukraine and civic organisation partners), the number of assaults on women journalists increased by 50% in 2018 as compared to 2017. An overall decline in assaults has been recorded in 2019; however, the number of women victims remained at 92% of the previous year's level, while the number of male journalist victims saw a considerably steeper decline, to 83% of the previous year's total.

High-profile attacks on female media workers:

- ▶ In September 2018, radicals protesting in front of the building of the Prosecutor General's Office beat Darina Bilera, a female journalist from the NEWSONE television channel, right on the air. They pelted her with eggs and tried to take away her microphone. One of the female rally participants hit the journalist in the face.
- ▶ In June 2019 in Volynia Oblast, Mariya Petruchyk, a journalist from the regional television channel Avers, was assaulted. Her ID badge was taken away and her finger was injured when her telephone was taken. The film crew had been trying to interview customs service workers on the subject of amber smuggling.
- ▶ In September 2019, during the filming of a story on traffic violators in Kyiv, one of the drivers struck Kateryna Kolhan, a journalist with the 2+2 television channel, knocked a telephone out of her hands, and ran it over with his car.

Most of the recorded attempted murders of journalists are related to their work in the combat zone in eastern Ukraine.

- ▶ In January 2017, a channel 5 film crew came under fire from militants whilst filming a story about the Ukrainian army.
- ▶ In February 2017, the British photographer Christopher Nunn was injured as a result of shelling by Avdiivka militants: they were firing on humanitarian aid distribution centres.
- ▶ In April 2018, the car in which a journalist and cameraman from channel 24 were travelling came under a targeted attack by militants; the media workers miraculously avoided being killed by an exploding anti-tank missile.

5/ NON-PHYSICAL AND/OR CYBER-ATTACKS AND THREATS

Figure 4 reflects the sub-categories of non-physical and/or cyber-attacks and threats. The top 3 methods of pressure on media workers include: bullying, intimidation, and threats of violence; damage to or seizure of property, vehicles, equipment, documents, and identity theft, phishing, and doxing.

One of the most widespread methods of intimidation or revenge against journalists in Ukraine is setting their personal car or editorial office on fire.

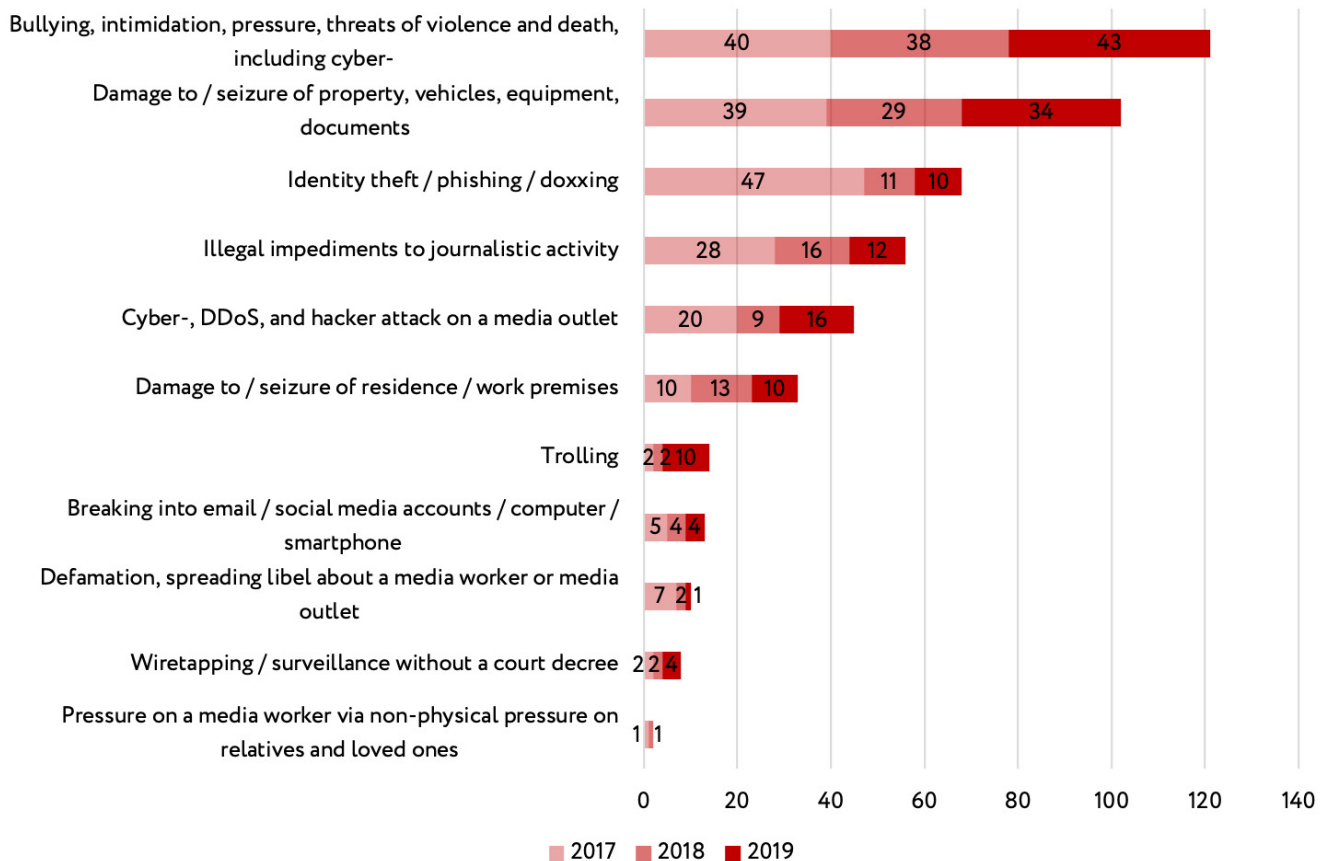
- ▶ In July 2018, a fire damaged office equipment, furniture, and part of the editorial office of the newspaper Sobytiye [Event] in the city of Kamianske, in Dnipropetrovsk Oblast. The police determined that the arson had been committed with the help of fumes from combustibles and lubricants.

- In February 2019, in the village of Khodosivka near Kiev, unknown persons set fire to the car of Vasyl Krutchak, host of the “School of Corruption” programme, destroying the vehicle.
- In March 2019 in Poltava, unidentified persons set fire to the car of Gennady Sikalov, founder of the publication Posledniy bastion [Last Bastion] and a politician, destroying the vehicle. He himself associates this with publications of several articles about one of the presidential candidates in Ukraine.
- In April 2019 in Dnipro, unidentified persons set fire to the car of Volodymyr Pisotskyi, editor-in-chief of the newspaper Zorya[Dawn], destroying the vehicle.
- In November 2019, the car of Oleksandr Tovstoy, founder of the weekly Bazar Media v Ukraine, was doused with a flammable mixture and set afire under the windows of his home.
- In December 2019, as the result of a deliberately set fire, the editorial office of the regional newspaper Holos Sambirshchyny[Voice of Sambirshchyna] in Lviv Oblast was burned down and its equipment destroyed.

Identity theft, phishing, and doxing are the favourite methods of attacks. The following is a list of the largest-scale attacks:

- From May 2016 through the present time, the personal data of more than five thousand Ukrainian and foreign journalists who obtained accreditation from the so-called “Donetsk People’s Republic” have been openly accessible on the Myrotvorets [Peacekeeper] website. The Myrotvorets website likewise regularly updates its “Chystylshche” [“Purgatory”] database with the personal data of journalists who, in the opinion of the anonymous volunteers moderating the website, have committed crimes against Ukraine’s national security.
- In February 2017, information about the work and movements of 16 journalists from foreign media in the ATO [Anti-Terrorist Operation] zone was published on the website of the civic movement Ukrainskyi vybor [Ukrainian Choice].
- In July 2017, data was published on a specially-created Facebook page that included the data of sixteen Ukrainian journalists.
- In September 2017, militants from the Luhansk People’s Republic [LNR] published a list of eleven Ukrainian and foreign journalists who had worked in the ATO.
- In August 2018, the website of the so-called Ministry of State Security of the LNR, as well as the websites Istok [Source] and Russkaya vesna [Russian Spring], published the personal data of nine journalists.
- In February 2019, seven journalists announced that they had received phishing messages on the Facebook social network.

Figure 4: Non-physical and/or cyber-attacks and threats



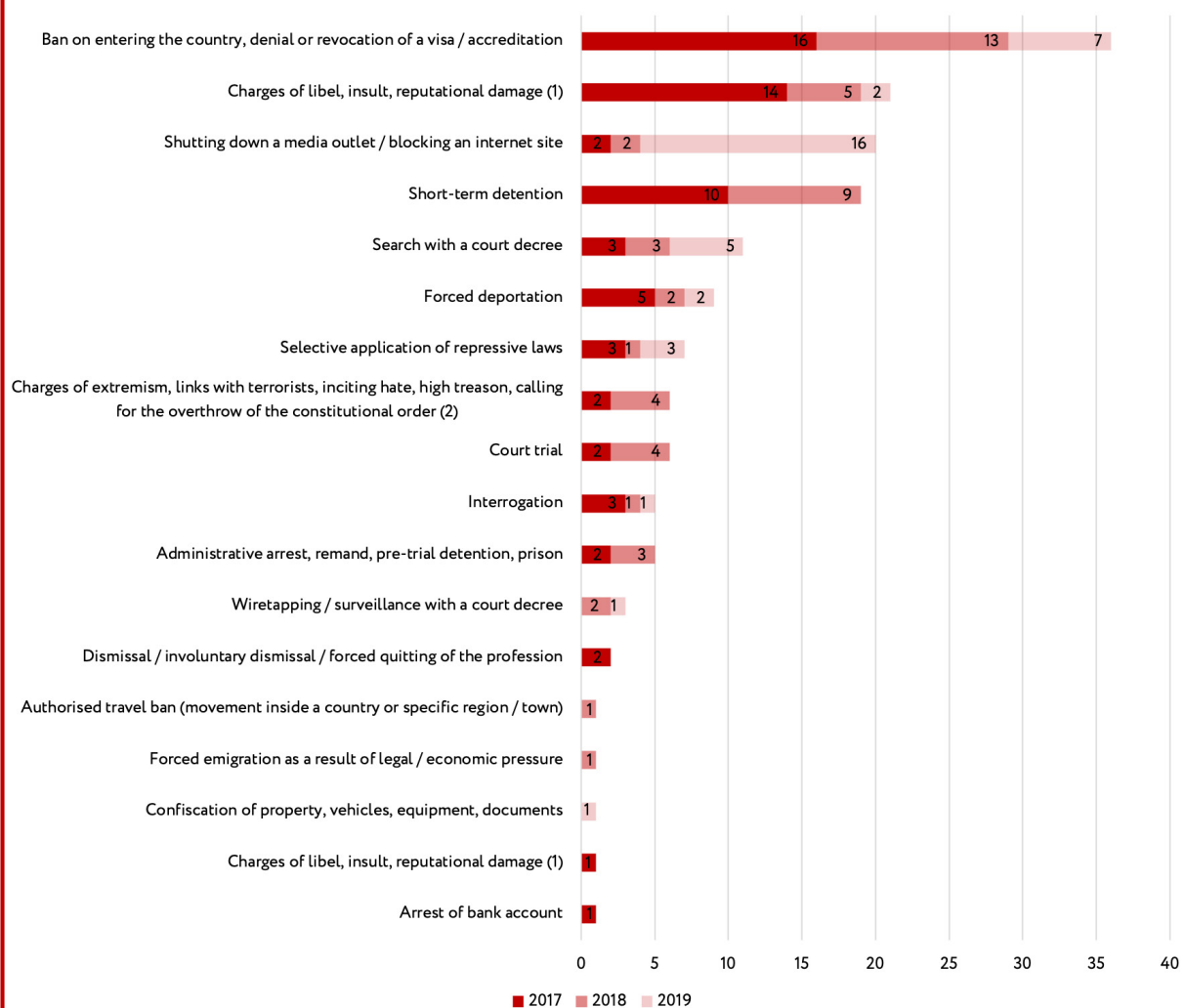
6/ ATTACKS VIA JUDICIAL AND/OR ECONOMIC MEANS

Figure 5 depicts the various sub-categories of attacks via judicial and/or economic means. The top 5 methods of pressure on journalists, bloggers, and media workers include: a ban on entering the country; accusation of libel, defamation, and reputational damage; short-term detentions; closure of a media outlet/blocking of internet sites, and searches authorised by a court ruling.

In three years, 36 incidents of bans on entry onto the territory of Ukraine have been recorded. In some cases, journalists were banned because they could not provide evidence of the purpose for their visit; in others, because of a violation of the procedure for visiting the occupied territories of Donetsk, Luhansk, and Crimea. As a rule, a three-year ban on entry is imposed on these journalists.

- In May 2017, two journalists from the Komsomolskaya pravda newspaper were detained short-term at the border. In the end, they were banned from entry to Ukraine for three years.
- In June 2017, the Russian blogger Ilya Varlamov was banned from entering Ukraine because he had previously illegally visited the occupied territories and published reports from Donetsk and Crimea.
- In August 2017, two Spanish journalists were detained upon arrival at Kyiv's Boryspil airport. Border guards informed them that their names had been placed on a blacklist.
- In May 2018, the Ukrainian Security Service (SBU) banned entry for three years to an Italian and Czech journalist.
- In November 2019, Max Levin, photo correspondent for ua, was denied accreditation into the zone of the Joint Forces Operation in Donbass, even though the journalist had been working there for five years.

Figure 5: Attacks via judicial or economic means



ANNEX 1: ATTACK TYPES, IDENTIFIED BY JFJ FOUNDATION

Physical attacks and threats to life, liberty, and health	Non-physical and/or cyber-attacks and threats	Attacks via judicial or economic means
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abduction, taking captivity/hostage, illegal deprivation of liberty • Attempted murder • Beating / injury / torture resulting in death • Death while in custody or as a result of loss of health in captivity • Disappearance • Fatal accident • Murder • Non-fatal accident • Non-fatal attack / beating / injury / torture • Pressure on a media worker via physical pressure on relatives and loved ones • Punitive psychiatric treatment not resulting in death • Punitive psychiatric treatment resulting in death • Sexual harassment • Sexual violence • Sudden unexplained death • Suicide • Suicide attempt • Unlawful military conscription 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breaking into email / social media accounts / computer / smart-phone • Bullying, intimidation, pressure, threats of violence and death, including cyber- • Cyber-, DDOS, and hacker attack on a media outlet • Damage to/ seizure of property, vehicles, equipment, documents • Damage to/seizure of the residence / work premises • Defamation, spreading libel about a media worker or media outlet • Identity theft / phishing / doxxing • Illegal impediments to journalistic activity • Pressure on a media worker via non-physical pressure on relatives and loved ones • Pressure on a source, including threats of violence and death • Trolling • Wiretapping / surveillance without a court decree 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administrative arrest, remand, pre-trial detention, prison • Administrative offence / fine • Arrest of bank account • Authorised travel ban (movement inside a country or specific region / town) • Ban on engaging in journalistic activity • Ban on entering the country, denial or revocation of a visa/ accreditation • Ban on leaving the country • Charges of extremism, links with terrorists, inciting hate, high treason, calling for the overthrow of the constitutional order (2) • Charges of libel, insult, reputational damage (1) • Confiscation of property, vehicles, equipment, documents • Court trial • Criminal case, excluding (1) and (2) • Dismissal / involuntary dismissal /forced quitting of the profession • Forced deportation • Forced emigration as a result of legal / economic pressure • House arrest • Interrogation • Pressure on a media worker via judicial and/or economic means on relatives and loved ones • Search with a court decree • Search without a court decree • Selective application of repressive laws • Short-term detention • Shutting down a media outlet / blocking an Internet site • Suspended sentence • Unauthorised travel ban (inside country, region or town) • Wiretapping/ surveillance with a court decree

ANNEX 2: OPEN SOURCES USED FOR THE REPORT (BELARUS)

- **Belorussian Association of Journalists** –non-governmental, non-profit and non-partisan association of media workers, promoting freedom of expression and independent journalism ideas in Belarus.
- **Ministry of Information of the Republic of Belarus** –a national government agency in the field of mass media that has serious administrative and sanction powers (from registering mass media to initiating their closure, as well as extrajudicial blocking of Internet resources).
- **Belsat** – a Polish free-to-air satellite television channel aimed at Belarus.
- **Belapan** –an independent news agency of Belarus.
- **Belta** – state news agency created to disseminate information about the activities of the state bodies of Belarus.
- **TUT.BY** – leading information website of Belarus.
- **Reporters without Borders** – an international non-profit and non-governmental organization that safeguards the right to freedom of information.
- Belarusian and English-language resources that are available online.

ANNEX 3: OPEN SOURCES USED FOR THE REPORT (RUSSIA)

- **Baikal-Daily** – news about Ulan-Ude, Irkutsk, Buryatia and Transbaikalia.
- **BezFormata** – news website.
- **Obshaya Gazeta** – online newspaper with socio-political focus
- **Novosti Tolyatti (Tolyatti News)** – news of Tolyatti.
- **Mediazona** – Mediazona focuses on the judicial, law enforcement and penal system in Russia.
- **Novaya Gazeta** -Russian newspaper well-known for its critical and investigative coverage of Russian political and social affairs.
- **OVD-Info** -a Russian non-governmental human rights media project aimed at combating political persecution.
- **Open Media** – an online publication about politics, economics, science and culture.
- **Roskomsvododa** – a public organization whose activities are aimed at protecting digital rights, promoting the ideas of freedom of information, the inadmissibility of state censorship and interference in private life.
- **Glasnost Defence Foundation**- a non-profit organization with the stated goals of defending journalists, journalism, and freedom of expression in Russia.
- **Council of Europe** – a platform to promote the protection of journalism and safety of journalists.
- **Freedom House** – a U.S.-based, U.S. government-funded non-profit non-governmental organization that conducts research and advocacy on democracy, political freedom, and human rights.
- **Index on Censorship** – an organization campaigning for freedom of expression, which produces a quarterly magazine of the same name from London.
- **The Bell** – media startup founded by Elizaveta Osetinskaya.
- **Caucasian Knot** – an online news site that covers the Caucasus region in English and Russian. It has a particular focus on politics and on human rights issues, including freedom of the press.
- **Committee to Protect Journalists** -an American independent non-profit, non-governmental organization. CPJ promotes press freedom and defends the rights of journalists.
- **Levada-Center** – a Russian non-governmental research organization. The Centre regularly conducts sociological research. Levada-Center is one of the largest Russian centers in the field.
- **MBK Media** -an independent online news outlet that focusses on what is happening in Russia and its regions.
- **Agora International Human Rights Group** – Agora International Human Rights Group is an association of more than 50 lawyers working on landmark human rights cases.

- **Journalists' and Media Workers' Union** – an independent organization for the protection of journalists and media workers.
- **Reporters without Borders** – an international non-profit, non-governmental organization that conducts political advocacy on issues relating to freedom of information and freedom of the press.
- **Roskomnadzor** – The Federal Service for Supervision of Communications, Information Technology and Mass Media or Roskomnadzor is the Russian federal executive body responsible for censorship in media and telecommunications.
- **Federal Agency on Press and Mass Communications of the Russian Federation** – a federal executive body responsible for providing government services and managing government property in the field of press, mass media and mass communications, including public computer networks used in electronic media as well as in printing and publishing.
- Russian and English-language resources that are available online.

ANNEX 4: OPEN SOURCES USED FOR THE REPORT (UKRAINE)

- **National Union of Journalists of Ukraine** – the biggest organization, which brings together journalists and other employee of the mass media in Ukraine. The union is an independent public non-profit organization.
- **Reporters without Borders** – an international non-profit, non-governmental organization that conducts political advocacy on issues relating to freedom of information and freedom of the press.
- **National Council of Television and Radio Broadcasting of Ukraine** – a constitutional, constantly operating collegial public authority that aims at observance of Ukrainian legislation in the sphere of television and radiobroadcasting, as well as at exercising regulatory powers prescribed by respective laws.
- Online resources of the **National Police of Ukraine**.
- A special section “Protection of the Rights of Journalists” on the official website of the **Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine**.
- **Ukrinform** – state news agency
- **Ukrainian information agency Ukrainian News** – leading private news agency.
- **Human Rights Center «ZMINA»** – ZMINA Human Rights Centre works in the field of freedom of speech, freedom of movement, combating discrimination, prevention of torture and ill-treatment, combating impunity, support for human rights defenders and civil society activists on the territory of Ukraine, including in the occupied Crimea, as well as the protection of the rights of the armed conflict victims.
- **The public organisation Platforma prav cheloveka (Platform for the human rights)** – non-profit organization that brought together experts with extensive experience and a high level of expertise in the non-governmental sector to develop and establish civil society by ensuring human rights standards.
- **National TV channel Magnolia-TV** -Ukrainian television channel, which broadcasts the emergency news reports.
- **National TV channel ZIK** – Ukrainian news channel. As of December 2019, it occupies the 4th place in the ranking of Ukrainian information channels.
- **Radion Free Europe/Radio Liberty** – a private, nonprofit, multimedia broadcasting corporation that serves as a surrogate media source in 27 languages and in 23 countries, including Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan, Russia, and Ukraine.
- **Facebook** – social network
- Ukrainian and English-language resources available online.