

Freedom of the press in Kosovo

Fact Sheet



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The Constitution of Kosovo clearly regulates freedom of expression and the media, while defamation has been decriminalised and is currently regulated under civil law. In 2005, the Kosovo Parliament established the Independent Media Commission (IMC) to oversee electronic media, which functions as an independent body responsible for regulating and overseeing the broadcasting frequency spectrum. Yet, despite the legal mandate for the IMC's independence, its structure and operations are susceptible to political influences and pressures, as the board members are affiliated to the ruling political parties.

The Radio Television of Kosovo (RTK) is a public service broadcaster encompassing television, broadcasting, and radio, and is subject to regulation under the Law on Public Broadcasting. The Constitutional Court's decision declared the licence fee, collected through electricity bills, unconstitutional and mandated a subsidy for RTK amounting to **0.7%** of the annual Kosovo Budget. This shift to direct state funding raises concerns as it compromises the broadcaster's editorial independence. Although the Law on Public Broadcasting requires RTK to devise a plan to cease the transitional state budget funding, the broadcaster's proposal is to continue receiving direct funding from the state, which may put the editorial independence of public television at risk. The RTK has been criticised for its general lack of investigative journalism, political bias, extensive coverage of the ruling political party and misleading coverage of opposition parties.

Media in Kosovo are not taxed or obliged to report their ownership. Media outlets rely mainly on advertisement revenues rather than state funding, leading to preferential treatment of major companies that are significant players in the advertising market. This situation has dual effects: while some media can sustain themselves through advertising income, their dependence on major advertisers frequently leads to self-censorship. The state does not offer assistance or funds to most

media, except for minority media, which receive small subsidies. Yet, while media outlets are facing major financial crises, political influence remains high.

Journalists in Kosovo have limited professional rights and are not sufficiently paid, while often, media employers fail to compensate them. However, out of apprehension about potential job loss, journalists refrain from expressing their concerns, and instances of contract breaches often go unreported to authorities or remain undisclosed to the public. According to the Association of Professional Journalists, there are approximately 20 instances annually where journalists face intimidation, obstruction in performing their duties, or threats.

Since the beginning of 2023, an increasing number of assaults on journalists and media personnel have been recorded in northern Kosovo, escalating after the protests in the region. The International and European Federations of Journalists (IFJ-EFJ) stand with their affiliate, the Association of Journalists in Kosovo (AGK), in condemning the violence directed at media practitioners. They urge the relevant authorities and media employers to guarantee the safety of journalists reporting from the field.

Empirical Evidence

- In June 2023, 9 journalists covering the developments in the north of Kosovo were brutally attacked by masked assailants.
- In June 2023, more than 12 ethnic Albanian journalists were attacked and harassed while reporting on protests taking place in Northern Kosovo.
- In December 2022, *Top Channel* journalist Leonita Bajrami was attacked with pyrotechnic explosives while reporting live from the Bosnian neighbourhood of Mitrovica, where a new barricade had been set up earlier that day.
- In December 2022, reporters Qëndresa Bellagoshi and Drin Demiri, cameraman Agon Bejtullahu and driver Elsad Sinani, the crew of *Klan Kosova*, were attacked while reporting in the municipality of Zubin Potok in northern Kosovo.

- In December 2022, an explosive device detonated near the *RTV Dukagjini* crew in the city of Mitrovica while reporter Doruntina Bylykbashi was delivering live coverage of the road blockades in the area.
- In December 2022, two journalists with the anti-corruption website *Kallxo.com*, Shkodrane Dakaj and Valdet Salihu, were attacked by masked individuals in North Mitrovica.

Resources

- [After an increase in attacks on journalists in Kosovo, police and international forces asked to provide better protection](#), Reporters Without Borders
- [Attacks in northern Kosovo: RSF and its partners call for better protection of journalists](#), Reporters Without Borders
- [Ethnic Albanian journalists attacked, vehicles vandalized during Serb protests in northern Kosovo](#), Committee to Protect Journalists
- [Freedom of Media in the Western Balkans](#), European Parliament
- [9 journalists attacked in northern Kosovo](#), Eren Beksac