

Joint open letter to Mr Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission: Call for EU action to protect journalists

6 March 2018

Dear President Juncker,

We, the undersigned organisations, are deeply saddened and appalled by the recent killings of Slovak journalist Ján Kuciak and Maltese journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia. These killings on European soil in retaliation for the investigative reporting by these journalists are simply unacceptable.

We welcome the condemning of these killings by the European Union (EU) institutions. However, we demand that no further time is wasted and these words are followed by action. We urge high-level officials from the European Commission to retain regular communication with senior police authorities in Slovakia and Malta to ensure that police investigations are full, thorough and independent.

Moreover, the European Commission must take the lead and hold state officials and public figures to account for creating an environment in which the critical function of journalism is respected. State officials and public figures should consistently speak out in support of the critical function of journalism and support journalists when they are attacked. A climate in which impunity prevails and in which journalists are only respected when they serve the interests of those in power, paves the way for violence.

These murders signal the urgent need to support civil society in the EU Member States in their efforts to fight impunity, and to document and promote accountability for violations of press freedom.

In today's world where a journalist is killed every five days with almost full impunity as a result, we have to stop the European region from becoming an environment where journalists are no longer safe to do their work. We call on the European Commission to work, as a priority, with Member States to begin the process of establishing national protection mechanisms for journalists in Europe.

When journalists are killed, they are silenced and the public is deprived of their stories. In the cases of Ján Kuciak and Daphne Caruana Galizia stories about corruption, organized crime and abuse of power. Stories the people have a right to know about. Safety of journalists is a precondition for good journalism that serves the societies and audiences. Our European democracies cannot thrive when journalists are silenced and cannot inform people about important developments and hold power holders to account.

We urge the European Commission to call on the governments of its member states to implement without any delay their existing commitments to provide a safe, enabling environment for journalists, flowing from numerous adopted United Nations resolutions on the safety of journalists and the Council of Europe recommendation on the Protection of Journalism and the Safety of Journalists and other media actors.

We urge the European Commission to take the lead in stepping up their efforts to protect journalists within Europe. The undersigned organisations stand ready to support in such efforts.

Your response to the killings of Ján Kuciak and Daphne Caruana Galizia will set a precedent for what is permissible in the European Union. A safe future for journalists in Europe is in your hands.

Yours sincerely,

