



To:

**Dr. Ursula von der Leyen**

President of the European Commission

cc:

**Ms. Věra Jourová**

Vice-President for Values and Transparency

Athens, 16 April 2021

Subject: Ensuring journalists' safety and physical integrity in the EU

Dear President von der Leyen,

Dear Vice-President Jourová,

We are writing to you in relation to the brutal killing of the Greek journalist George Karaivaz.

It is regrettably another despicable act, which follows the assassination of Daphne Caruana Galizia in Malta in 2017 and of Ján Kuciak in Slovakia in 2018.

Physical threats and violence against journalists have been, unfortunately, on the rise.

These crimes can lead to media's self-censorship and therefore, have a grave chilling effect on freedom of expression, as enshrined in Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

Press has a vital role to play in the functioning of a democratic society. Journalists' public watchdog role is crucial for a democratic society, based on the rule of law. Moreover, it has an instrumental role in ensuring an open and vigorous public debate, thereby reinforcing the public's trust in our democratic processes.

In this regard, we need to do away with the sense of impunity for crimes against journalists.

Therefore, we call upon you to use all means at your disposal towards guaranteeing the safety and physical integrity of journalists in the EU.

This includes a swift adoption of a Recommendation on the safety of journalists, as outlined in the 2020 European Democracy Action Plan. The Recommendation should have a significant focus on threats against women journalists, who are also increasingly subject to online and offline threats.

We believe it will be an important first signal to the perpetrators but, primarily, to our fellow citizens that the EU is taking the matter seriously and is committed to preserve media freedom and the democratic process.

Yours sincerely,

Stelios Kypouropoulos

Miriam Lexmann (EPP)

Henna Virkkunen (EPP)

Ivars Ijabs (Renew Europe)

Cyrus Engerer (S&D)

Michal Wiezik (EPP)

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Niklas Nienaß (Greens/EFA)

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Petros Kokkalis (GUE/NGL)

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Ernest Urtasun (Greens/EFA)

Dace Melbārde (ECR)

Elena Kountoura (GUE/NGL)

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