

March 20, 2024

To:

Pavel Blažek, Minister of Justice of the Czech Republic

Vít Rakušan, Minister of Interior of the Czech Republic

Catherine De Bolle, Executive Director EUROPOL

Vera Jourova, Vice-President, European Commission

Dear Prime Minister Fiala,

On behalf of the Council of Europe [Platform to promote the protection of journalism and safety of journalists](#), we are writing to express our deep concern with regard to the security threats faced by Russian exiled journalists based in the Czech Republic, and to call upon your help to guarantee their safety. Across Europe, exiled journalists, most of whom have been forced to flee brutal regimes, are extremely exposed, and without greater support from the authorities face a grave risk of serious harm.

We are particularly concerned about the fate of exiled Russian journalists and the ease with which suspected Russian agents are able to locate, follow and intimidate them. Some have already been poisoned while traveling through Europe, including Prague.¹ Since the killing of Alexei Navalny, governments must treat all threats and acts of intimidation against exiled Russian journalists with the greatest seriousness and redouble efforts to ensure their safety.

The partner organizations of the platform met in Thessaloniki for the launch of our [annual report](#) where we met with Irina Dolinina, a journalist for the Russian investigative media iStories, forced into exile at the start of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Irina Dolinina and her colleague Alesya Marakhovskaya, moved to Prague from where they have continued their work informing the world of the atrocities of the war and the operations of the Russian state.² However, since their arrival they have been subjected

¹ <https://theins.ru/en/politics/264280>

² [Leaked Emails Reveal How Putin's Friends Dodged Sanctions With Help of Western Enablers](#)

to a continuous wave of death threats from suspected Russian agents who know where they live, are able to freely stalk them through the streets of Prague and are even able to track their flight bookings across Europe.

On 21st September the Council of Europe Platform members issued this [alert](#) to which the Czech government [responded](#) assuring us of its commitment to the safety of journalists, and of the measures that the Czech police had taken to investigate the matter. The response concluded with: *“The Prague Police investigated the case, however the case was closed because it was not possible to find out the facts that would justify the initiation of criminal proceedings against a specific person.”*

While we are grateful for your government’s attention to their case we do not believe the gravity of their plight has been fully understood. The police must take seriously the very credible threat posed to the journalists, as well as the consequences of having Russian agents free to roam the streets of Prague stalking and threatening journalists who were forced to flee the country for their safety.

Moreover, the ease with which the agents are able to access flight data in the EU is concerning for the overall integrity of Europe’s information systems as well as the security of journalists and other actors whose lives are threatened by state actors.

We therefore ask your government to reopen the investigation of the case, to provide enhanced security measures to the journalists, to identify and take action against the perpetrators, and to work with European partners and Europol to improve the security of personal travel information.

Irina and Alesya are being targeted for their fearless reporting and readiness to put their lives on the line to expose the corruption and abuse of power within the Russian state.

We all owe it to them and to their colleagues facing similar threats in other countries to provide their unconditional support and to guarantee their safety.

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- [Harrowing Accounts of Ukrainians Who Were Detained, Questioned and Tortured by Russian Troops near Kyiv](#)
 - [Love, Offshores, and Administrative Resources: How Marrying Putin’s Daughter Gave Kirill Shamalov a World of Opportunity](#)
 - [The Troika Laundromat](#)

Respectfully,

Platform Partners

Justice for Journalists Foundation (JFJ)

International Press Institute (IPI)

International Federation of Journalists (IFJ)

Association of European Journalists

European Federation of Journalists (EFJ)

Index on Censorship

International News Safety Institute (INSI)

PEN International

Free Press Unlimited (FPU)

Reporters Without Borders (RSF)

