

Police State: German Journalists Could Be Charged with Treason and Face Jail Time for Reporting on Surveillance

Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) representative warns about impact on free media of criminal investigation of Netzpolitik.org

By [Global Research News](#)

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OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media Dunja Mijatović today said the launch of a treason investigation in Germany against the owner and a reporter for a website could harm reporting in the public interest.

“The threat of being charged with treason has a clear general chilling effect on journalists engaged in investigative reporting,” Mijatović said in a letter to Frank-Walter Steinmeier, Minister for Foreign Affairs.

On 24 July, the Federal Prosecutor General wrote informing Netzpolitik.org owner and editor, Markus Beckedahl, and its journalist, André Meister, about the investigation into two articles published on 25 February and 15 April. The articles in question report on the government’s plans regarding online surveillance programmes.

If convicted, Meister and Beckedahl could face imprisonment.

“I believe that in cases of possible violations of confidentiality or state secrets regulations, authorities should refrain from trailing the media whose job it is to investigate and report about issues of public importance,” Mijatović wrote.

“I note many reactions by civil society and several local and international NGOs including Reporter Ohne Grenzen, the Committee to Protect Journalists, the European Federation of Journalists, and Deutscher Journalisten Verband among others on this matter. I also note the announcement made by Prosecutor-General Harald Range to suspend the investigation,” she said. “I urge the authorities in Germany to look into the case and ensure that freedom of information and freedom of the media are respected, and hope the investigation is terminated.”

The Representative also welcomed a recent statement by Minister of Interior Heiko Maas saying the investigation may show a need to reform criminal law provisions on treason and protection of state secrets in relation to free media.

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