

Josep Borrell
President
European Parliament

June 1st 2006

Dear Mr Borrell,

The IFJ is very concerned about recent developments in Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands which require, I believe, a robust response from the European Union in defence of its commitment to the defence of press freedom and fundamental rights of journalists.

Last month, the government of Denmark decided to put on trial two journalists who exposed the Government's lack of credible evidence for its decision to back the invasion of Iraq.

A few weeks later, in Germany, a scandal took place over reports that correspondents had been put under surveillance to try to stop leaks to the press. The German government says the Federal security agency, the Bundesnachrichtendienst (BND), has been ordered not to undertake operative measures against journalists after revelations that the BND had monitored reporters and even paid journalists to spy on their colleagues.

Last week, our Dutch affiliate the Dutch Association of Journalists (NVJ) and the national editors' association called for protection for journalists from eavesdropping by the country's national intelligence service after it emerged that two journalists had their communications tapped by security services. Interior Minister Johan Remkes has told the Dutch parliament that journalists are not shielded from investigation by the security agency the AIVD and the prosecution service. His comments are in response to the revelation that journalists working for the leading daily *De Telegraaf* had had their telephones tapped.

In all these cases there is what amounts to a lack of regard for the need to respect the independence of media and the right of journalists to report freely. By the very nature of their work, journalists need free access to sources and they need to be able to know that are not subject to monitoring in their daily work. It becomes impossible to protest sources of information when the authorities are listening to their daily communications.

It is becoming increasingly clear that there are not sufficient measures in place across the European Union to protect legitimate journalism from intrusive and potentially chilling surveillance by police and security forces within the EU member states.

In these circumstances we ask the Parliament, as we have asked the Commission, to investigate

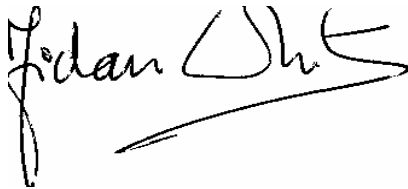
- a) whether there is any co-ordinated policy of surveillance of media in Europe,
- b) whether police forces are co-operating in actions directed at media or journalists.

At the same time, I believe that the leaders of the European Union and, in particular members of the European Parliament, should intervene to remind member states of their obligations to provide support for the right to media to report freely and the right of journalists to protect their sources. I believe an early statement by you about our concerns on these matters will be most helpful.

Commissioner Frattini has stated several times that there is a need to balance the protection of fundamental rights against measures that will enhance security and public welfare. There is an increasing concern that this balance is not being struck.

Governments are trying to enforce new standards of secrecy and surveillance that are a violation of press freedom and the peoples right to know. It is time for governments at national and international level to change direction in favour of protection of fundamental liberties and we urge the European Parliament to make clear that public rights and interests are compromised when actions are taken that inhibit and hinder the work of journalists and media.

With Kind Regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Aidan White', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

AIDAN WHITE
General Secretary, IFJ