

Announcing the 2018 winner of the Peter Mackler Award for Courageous and Ethical Journalism

NEW YORK, NY, Aug. 22, 2018 – The Global Media Forum Training Group, the U.S. branch of Reporters Without Borders (RSF), and Agence France-Presse (AFP) today announce that Montenegrin journalist Jovo Martinović is the 2018 winner of the Peter Mackler Award for Courageous and Ethical Journalism. The award, which is in its tenth year, will be presented at a ceremony on September 27th, 2018 at the Craig Newmark Graduate School of Journalism.

Martinović is a veteran freelance investigative journalist in Montenegro known for his extensive reporting on organized crime in Europe and war criminals in the Balkans. He has worked for such international outlets as NPR, BBC, VICE, CBS, Canal Plus, The Economist, TIME, The Financial Times, Global Post and the Balkan Investigative Reporting network (BIRN).

In October 2015, Montenegrin authorities arrested Martinović on charges of marijuana trafficking and participation in a criminal organization, detaining him for more than 14 months despite the prosecution's failure to substantiate the allegations with evidence.

Martinović's prosecution – as well his unprecedentedly long and unjustified pre-trial detention – has been widely criticized by international human rights groups and press freedom advocates.

The charges against Martinović were filed in the wake of his investigations into drug trafficking, weapons smuggling and other criminal activity. In 2014, he worked with VICE on a documentary series about the infamous Pink Panthers, a Balkan-based international network of jewelry thieves. At the time of his arrest, he was conducting research for French production company CAPA Presse for a documentary (*La route de la Kalashnikov*) about weapons smuggling from the Balkans to Western Europe. (It subsequently aired on the French TV channel Canal Plus.)

Martinović was previously arrested in 2004 while researching the Kosovo Liberation Army's crimes against humanity after Kosovo's liberation. Charged with "denigration of the good name of the Republic of Montenegro," he was also warned not to work "against Albanian interests." The charges were later dropped because of international pressure.

"The Balkans was a region my father covered extensively and got to know intimately through several conflicts. I can think of no greater tribute, on this tenth year of the award, than to recognize the achievements of a journalist who has courageously and at great personal cost devoted himself to reporting truth from that part of the world," said Camille Mackler, Peter Mackler Award project director at the Global Media Forum Training Group. "Media is under attack like never before, and during this turbulent period for global order, it is more critical than ever to remember the principles of ethical and courageous journalism. Jovo Martinović has repeatedly displayed these qualities as he has fought to carry out his profession. We are thrilled to name him this year's winner of the Peter Mackler Award," she said.

In September 2016, in an open letter to Montenegrin Prime Minister Milo Đukanović, Human Rights Watch, the Committee to Protect Journalists and Reporters Without Borders jointly demanded Martinović's release pending the outcome of his trial and expressed concern that "the investigation and charges against Martinović are motivated by his work as a journalist, rather than criminal behavior on his part, and as such should be dropped." International journalists who worked with Martinović, they wrote, "attest to his integrity and professionalism," particularly in "establishing direct sources in criminal organizations."

The International Federation of Journalists – along with its European and Montenegrin affiliates – also publicly addressed the prime minister, declaring that "the criminalisation of journalists who specialise in sensitive subjects poses an imminent threat to press freedom."

Martinović's supporters note that the case against him is solely based on allegations from a single suspect and pot dealer who was released by the special prosecutor in exchange for testifying – falsely, they claim – against Martinović for the crimes he has investigated. They also cite a series of articles in *Vijesti*, a leading independent Montenegrin paper, alleging that the special prosecutor pressured a detained Pink Panther gang member to implicate Martinović in crimes he had not committed.

The 44-year-old Martinović, who has steadfastly proclaimed his innocence, was released from custody at the beginning of 2017. But he is still facing trial – and up to 10 years in prison if convicted. His freedom of movement has been restricted, as the court has possession of his passport. He is obliged to report to the police each month and has been unable to work full-time as a journalist -- to support his family or pay his defense expenses.

Montenegro, which has applied for membership in the European Union, can be a perilous place for independent journalists. "Press freedom has taken a beating," wrote a senior analyst at the Committee to Protect Journalists in 2014. In 2004, Dusko Jovanović, the editor-in-chief of the opposition daily *Dan*, was murdered as he left his office. In 2013, the premises of *Vijesti* was bombed. Journalists' cars have been burned. Such cases of violence tend to remain unsolved or are not prosecuted. And those who, like Jovo Martinović, work for international media, risk government retaliation if officials are unhappy with their reports on corruption or organized crime. On the press freedom index compiled by Reporters Without Border, the country ranks 103 out of 180.

"By giving this award to Jovo Martinović, we pay tribute to the courage of the many journalists who, like him, are fighting for the freedom to inform in Montenegro," said Pauline Ades-Mevel, who heads the EU-Balkans desk at Reporters Without Borders (RSF), a Peter Mackler Award partner. "Jovo spent more than a year behind bars for reporting freely and independently and symbolizes the difficulties that an investigative journalist may encounter in Montenegro for so doing." The award is granted, she said, as a "message of hope for the community of journalists throughout the region."

Unable to accept his prize in person, Martinović plans to attend the Sept. 27 award ceremony via video conference. “I am deeply honoured and grateful for being chosen as the Peter Mackler Award recipient for 2018. It’s a great encouragement to carry on in journalism despite all the obstacles that I and my colleagues face in Montenegro and other Balkan countries,” he said.

This year’s ceremony is the first to take place at the Craig Newmark School of Journalism at the City University of New York, the new home of the Peter Mackler Award for Courageous and Ethical Journalism.

“We are delighted to help administer this important journalistic prize,” said Dean Sarah Bartlett. “Many of our students are intent on pursuing international reporting, and the courageous journalism celebrated at this event will serve as a tremendous inspiration to them.”

The ceremony will take place on September 27, 2018 at 6pm at the Newmark Journalism School, 219 West 40th Street, New York, NY 10018. The ceremony will be followed by a networking hour. Tickets can be bought on the [Peter Mackler Award website](#) or by clicking on this link.

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