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IFJ Condemns Media Ban in Macedonia Parliament

The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) and its European group the European Federation of Journalists (EFJ) today joined their affiliates, the Trade Union of Macedonian Journalists and Media Workers (SSNM) and the Association of Journalists of Macedonia, in condemning the authorities at the Macedonian Parliament for the decision to expel journalists from its building ahead of the debate on the budget which took place on Monday 24 December.

SSNM said that journalists were removed by force from the Parliament's public gallery from which they were following the debate on the 2013 budget.

"We condemn the decision to ban journalists from a public debate of such public interest," said Jim Boumelha, IFJ President. "The measure runs counter to Parliamentary good practices to conduct their business in the light of day. Journalists' access to information is crucial to achieving that. By giving orders to evict journalists, the authorities wanted to be the ones to decide what should or should not be reported. "

According to the SSNM, Parliament's authorities claimed security concerns to justify their action but the union said that the budget had incited heated political debate and tensions in Macedonia. The union accused the lawmakers of violating the country's constitution and the Parliament's Rules which require sessions to be open to the public, in principle.

Both the IFJ and EFJ support the SSNM in condemning the decision which amounts to censorship of legitimate journalism and undermines the free flow of information to the public in Macedonia.

"The decision is more about attempting to control information than addressing any security consideration," added EFJ President Arne König. "Our colleagues deserve an apology and assurances that such a measure must never be repeated."

For more information, please contact IFJ on +32 2 235 2207

The IFJ represents more than 600.000 members in 134 countries

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