EU calls for greater protection for journalists

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A total of 23 journalists have been killed in the EU since 1992, with the majority of the killings taking place during the past six years [File]

Brussels, September 17 (RHC)-- The European Union's executive arm asked its member countries on Thursday to better protect journalists amid a rise of physical attacks and online threats against media professionals.

According to the European Commission, 908 journalists and media workers were attacked across the 27-nation bloc in 2020.

A total of 23 journalists have been killed in the EU since 1992, with the majority of the killings taking place during the past six years. "No journalist should die or be harmed because of their job. We need to support and protect journalists; they are essential for democracy," said Vera Jourova, the commission vice-president for values and transparency.

"The pandemic has showed more than ever the key role of journalists to inform us. And the urgent need for public authorities to do more to protect them." Murders of reporters remain rare in Europe, but the killings of journalists in Slovakia and Malta in recent years have raised concerns about reporters' safety in developed, democratic societies.

Earlier this year, European Commission president Ursula von der Leyen expressed support to investigative journalism after the killing of Peter R de Vries, a renowned Dutch journalist who reported on the violent underworld of the Netherlands.

The commission's non-binding proposals include recommendations for EU countries to ensure fair and effective investigations and prosecutions, and to provide protection to those under threat, with a strong focus on female journalists.

According to the EU, 73 percent of female journalists have experienced online violence and the commission said EU countries should "support initiatives aimed at empowering women journalists and professionals belonging to minority groups and those reporting on equality issues".

The bloc's executive arm also proposed the creation of support services, including helplines, legal advice, and psychological support.   It insisted on the need to ensure reporters' safety during demonstrations, where most of the attacks take place.

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