

# Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/slovenia-two-journalists-threatened-for-02-12-2011/41507.html>

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Europe & ex-USSR - Slovenia

Death threats

## Two journalists threatened for saying politicians were involved in arms trafficking

2 December 2011

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Reporters Without Borders deplores all the online calls that have been made in the past few days for the death of **Matej Surc** and **Blaz Zgaga**, two journalists who wrote a series of books about the alleged involvement of former Slovenian politicians in arms trafficking during the Balkan wars in the 1990s.

**Surc** and **Zgaga** have been the target of an unusually aggressive smear campaign combining insults and explicit death threats ever since Politikis ([www.politikis.si](http://www.politikis.si)), a website run by supporters of the Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS), posted an article criticizing their books. It prompted a flood of anonymous threats against them and their families.

The two journalists wrote a trilogy entitled "In the state's name" describing how thousands of tons of arms and munitions were sold clandestinely on former Yugoslavia's battlefields during the 1990s in violation of a UN embargo, generating millions in hidden profits.

According to their research, Slovenia was one of the main logistic centres for storing and transporting the arms. They claimed that Slovenia's then defence minister, Janez Jansa (who was later prime minister), and former interior minister Igor Bavcar played a key role in the trafficking, and that senior Slovenian intelligence and military officials were also very involved.

Reporters Without Borders voices its full support for **Surc** and **Zgaga**. Their investigations into arms trafficking during the Balkan wars lifted the lid on a subject of public interest nationally and internationally. Slovenian and European politicians cannot claim to be combating impunity for the crimes committed during these wars if they refuse to acknowledge their own role in providing the arms.

We urge those in charge of Politikis and other websites to quickly rid their comments and forum sections of all calls for the death of these two journalists which are not protected by the right to free speech. The management of these websites must also clearly condemn the posting of such comments.

We also call on the Slovenian authorities to immediately launch a thorough investigation aimed at identifying the people responsible for these threats, who are hiding behind acronyms. As we have seen in other cases, the security services have the technical resources to do this and must use their prerogatives. Those responsible for the threats must be prosecuted and punished.

Reporters Without Borders also urges all the political parties, especially the SDS, to take a clear public position in support of the need to allow the media to freely investigate the role of Slovenia and its former rulers in the 1990s Balkan wars. This cannot be a taboo subject in Slovenia, especially as it is a European Union member.

**Zgaga** received similar threats after helping Finnish journalist Magnus Berglund make a programme for the Finnish TV station YLE in September 2008 alleging that former Prime Minister Jansa and other senior officials received kickbacks from a contract with the Finnish arms manufacturer Patria for the purchase of armoured vehicles.

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