

OSCE media freedom representative asks Bulgarian authorities to ensure media are safe from assaults by high-profile politician

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VIENNA, 8 July 2013 – [The OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media](#), Dunja Mijatović, today expressed concern over the latest case of intimidation of journalists by parliamentarian and Ataka Party leader Volen Siderov, and asked the authorities to ensure that the media can work freely in Bulgaria. On 5 July a television crew of SKAT TV was verbally and physically assaulted by Siderov and other members of his political party in Bourgas while trying to interview the parliamentarian. The five journalists filed complaints with the local police claiming that they were verbally attacked, physically injured and their equipment was damaged during the incident.

“This kind of behaviour towards members of the media is unacceptable. Politicians should rather lead by example in showing a higher level of tolerance towards public criticism and make sure that even voices they disagree with are protected,” Mijatović said.

Mijatović added that her Office had registered several cases of verbal and physical attacks on journalists by Siderov in recent years.

“Such intimidation not only threatens the affected journalists, it can also harm free expression and have a chilling effect on media freedom. Political immunity should not be used to allow the mistreatment of journalists and the public humiliation of media workers,”

“I trust that the Bulgarian authorities will ensure that such behaviour is no longer tolerated,” she said.