

AEJ Media Freedom Representative's Annual Report for the Bucharest Congress 2011

By William Horsley

The AEJ has been part of an intense Europe-wide struggle by journalists and non-governmental organisations to stand up against governments' restrictions on media freedom and moves that endanger journalists' safety. Members in all sections are encouraged to keep informed on these developments, which are affecting the work of journalists across Europe, and consider how their own sections may play a part.

The AEJ Media Freedom Representative has spent four years taking an active part in policy debates with the Council of Europe and the European Union's institutions, as well as various campaigns. The AEJ's voice is well recognised and able to speak up in defence of our common interests and rights as journalists.

On 3 May, World Press Freedom Day, voluntary contributions from AEJ members enabled Javier Fernandez, AEJ vice-president, to join Dogan Tilic in Istanbul at a major gathering to protest the imprisonment of over 60 Turkish journalists and call for the repeal of repressive Turkish laws regarding the media and free expression.

Many other AEJ sections held special events, including protests and debates, to raise public awareness of the importance of press freedom.

We took part in website and letter campaigns related to the wrongful imprisonment of more than 60 journalist and other forms of oppression of free media in Turkey, repeated abuses of state power and law against journalists in Belarus, and severe concerns about the impact on media independence of Hungary's package of media laws. NB 23 November is now International Day Against Impunity.

Over the past year, the AEJ website www.aej.org carried 30 news items and features about current issues for media freedom, including the AEJ Media Freedom Representative's presentations at international forums, including the European Commission's *Speak Up! For Freedom of Expression* conference in Brussels on 6 May, the OSCE's Conference on Safety of Journalists in Vilnius on 7-8 September, and the UN Inter-Agency Meeting on Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity at UNESCO's Paris headquarters on 13 September.

Council of Europe: Major developments

MF violations: The AEJ, with IFJ and others, publicly protested at the failure of member states to implement their promise from January 2010 to gather data on serious media freedom violations across Europe and take new steps to ensure respect for Article 10 (freedom of expression) of the European Convention.

Anti-terrorism laws: The AEJ, with 40 other organisations, wrote to Council of Europe Secretary-General Thornbjorn Jagland for a third time in July 2011 to protest at the failure of the Secretary-General and the Committee of Ministers to ensure that states fulfil their promise to review national anti-terrorism laws, and amend them to comply with Article 10.