

# Duma Gets Bill on Penalties for Attacking Journalists

By [Natalya Krainova](#)

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A bill toughening punishment for attacks on journalists was submitted Friday to the State Duma, just as police said they had a "real chance" of solving this month's brutal beating of Kommersant reporter Oleg Kashin.

The bill proposes introducing a separate article in the Criminal Code on preventing journalists from fulfilling their duties through violence or threats, said Irina Yarovaya, a co-author of the bill, Interfax reported.

Killing or maiming journalists, or threatening to do so, would be punishable by jail terms of six to 15 years, while lesser violence, currently not subject to imprisonment, would land offenders behind bars for two to five years. Non-violent obstruction of a journalist's work would carry a sentence of up to two years.

No date was set over the weekend for a hearing on the draft, submitted by several lawmakers

with the ruling United Russia party.

Vsevolod Bogdanov, head of the Russian Union of Journalists, said the bill would help "defend the interests" of reporters, Interfax reported.

But Kommersant editor-in-chief Mikhail Mikhailin said current laws were "enough" to fight crimes against journalists and that "the best way to prevent crime is to make punishment inescapable," Interfax reported.

Justice may be achieved soon in Kashin's beating, a senior law enforcement source [told RIA-Novosti](#) on Friday, citing unspecified "real results" from work done by evidence-gathering policemen in the case.

Kashin, a prominent reporter and blogger, remains hospitalized and under police protection after a Nov. 6 assault that left him with multiple broken bones, including his jaw and fingers. A composite picture of a suspect in the beating was leaked to the press last week.

President Dmitry Medvedev has pledged to have the attackers punished "regardless of their social status," an indirect acknowledgement that the assault could have been ordered by officials Kashin criticized in his publications.

There are an average of five attacks on journalists per month in Russia, Mikhail Fedotov, head of the Kremlin's human rights council, told Interfax earlier this month. The Glasnost Defense Foundation has said that at least 30 attacks against journalists, including eight murders, have been registered this year.

Nineteen murders of journalists in Russia remain unsolved since 2000, according to the New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists.

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