

# Media Watchdog Blasts Sochi Restrictions

By [The Moscow Times](#)

January 28, 2014

**The  Moscow Times**

**SOCHI** — An international journalism watchdog on Tuesday criticized Russian authorities for restricting news coverage of preparations for the Sochi Olympics.

The New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists detailed in a report how Russian and international journalists have been harassed and prevented from covering sensitive stories in Sochi such as the abuse of migrant workers and environmental issues.

The report documented how Russian state-controlled media has been ignoring critical issues while the few local journalists working for independent news outlets faced a smear campaign and harassment.

"Russian authorities have cracked down on journalists, rights defenders, and civil activists in a way not seen since the breakup of the Soviet Union," CPJ coordinator Nina Ognianova said in a statement.

There was no immediate response from Russian authorities to the criticism leveled by CPJ.

Months before the start of the Games, journalists and activists were detained and some of them put on trial. Svetlana Kravchenko of the Caucasian Knot website, a prominent local journalist who has covered environmental travesties in Sochi and the heavy-handed tactics of local officials, was tried and found guilty of beating up a security guard.

Rights groups including Human Rights Watch called local authorities responsible for the campaign of harassment against journalists and activists. Local authorities insist that criminal prosecution against members of the public including journalists is a matter for law enforcement agencies and is in no way politicized.

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