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TRANSLATION OF PRESS RELEASE OF DEUTSCHER JOURNALISTEN
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Cologne Appeal of the DJV about Freedom of Press

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Legal authorities and politicians endanger the freedom of press in the Federal Republic of Germany: Most recently, the infringements of public prosecutors against journalists and editorial offices of the printed and broadcasted media have increased; the editorial secret was grossly violated, the right of journalists to refuse testimony was lifted. Parallel to this, politicians are threatening to restrict the freedom of press. Bills to tighten the press laws of the states – for instance in the Saarland – contribute to a climate, in which such infringements are even more likely.

In the eyes of the German Association of Journalists (DJV), these actions and initiatives of legal authorities and politicians threaten one foundation of the democratic constitution, which is the freedom of information for the media and for all citizens.

The DJV opines that the currently discussed and practically applied approaches to restrict the freedom of press is an attempt to intimidate journalists and to hinder them with their task to inform. This is even more alarming if legal authorities and politicians act in their own interest by trying to impede a reporting of their own (mis-)behavior.

The Labor Union of the Journalists demands from legal authorities and politicians: Hands off the freedom of press!

The federal German laws suffice to punish possible wrongdoings of the media and of individual journalists; no tightening of the law is required. Furthermore, the self-control of the media takes care that in research and publication, ethical norms are being obeyed.; there is no need for additional media control commissions as suggested by interested politicians.

The house searching and confiscation activities against the media of last week, however, did prove that an enhanced right to refuse testimony and a prohibition of confiscations is

long overdue in order to protect informers and to secure the freedom of expression and the freedom of information.

The DJV appeals to politicians to take up the corresponding reform suggestions of the professional associations of the media and of the German Press Council.

Imprint:

Department for Public Relations: Ulrike Kaiser

TRANSLATOR'S AFFIDAVIT:

I CERTIFY THAT I POSSESS EXPERT COMPREHENSION OF BOTH THE ENGLISH AND GERMAN LANGUAGES AND THAT THE ABOVE IS A TRUE AND ACCURATE TRANSLATION.

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J. M. Damon, MA, The University of Texas at Austin
27 August 2001