

Rt Hon David Lidington MP
Minister of State for Europe
Foreign & Commonwealth Office
King Charles Street
London SW1A 2AH

3 November 2014



I am writing on behalf of Transparency International (TI) to express our deep concern following a threatening campaign mounted with the apparent complicity of the authorities against MANS, Transparency International's partner organisation in Montenegro, and specifically against Vanja Čalović, the Executive Director of MANS.

It is notable that this campaign coincides with the release of MANS' final report on irregularities during the May elections and recently published investigation highlighting the worrying links between organised crime, government institutions and commercial banks in Montenegro.

This latest public smear campaign is a nasty, intimidatory and personal attack, with underlying threats to personal security and a clear attempt to silence not only MANS, but also anyone in the country who has the courage to highlight the type of abuses that have been outlined in the MANS investigation and report.

The latest episodes in this campaign represent a renewed attempt to undermine Ms Čalović's credibility through fabricated videos and a law suit. Furthermore, the nature of the smear campaign suggests a particularly vicious effort to silence and intimidate a prominent female civil society activist.

On multiple occasions Transparency International has contacted the Montenegro Government to request that civil society actors are allowed to work free from fear and harassment. Nevertheless, the intimidation has further intensified, with the attacks in 2014 clearly denying Ms Čalović the basic right to human dignity, a right formally protected by Article 28 of the Montenegrin constitution.

Transparency International fully supports the important work of its partner in Montenegro. As you would expect, we condemn this latest intimidatory campaign directed at Vanja Calovic, and we also hope that the UK Government will do so.

I am writing to request formally that you to take firm action and, on the behalf of the UK, remind the Government in Montenegro that a safe space for civil society is a critical element for a future European member state.

My colleagues and I would be happy to brief your officials in more detail.

Yours sincerely



Robert Barrington
Executive Director

Cc Peter Wilkinson, Desk Officer for Serbia and Montenegro, Foreign & Commonwealth Office