



COURAGE IN JOURNALISM AWARD 2018

RECIPIENT: JÁN KUCIAK



Ján Kuciak 1990 – 2018

Ján Kuciak worked as an investigative reporter for the Slovakian news website Aktuality.sk.

During his time at Aktuality, Kuciak investigated allegations of tax fraud associated with individuals close to the ruling social democrat party. Kuciak had also been working on an investigation into an Italian mafia group alongside the Sarajevo-based Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP), specifically looking at connections between the Italian mafia and their political influence in Slovakia.

On the 25th of February 2018 Kuciak was found shot dead alongside his fiancée Martina Kusnirova in their home. Kuciak had a single bullet wound to the chest, Kusnirova received a fatal shot wound to the head.

Both Ján and Martina were 27 at the time of their death.

His unfinished article, which was published posthumously, alleged that businessmen in eastern Slovakia – with links to Calabria's notorious 'Ndrangheta mafia – were embezzling EU structural funds. After his death, prosecutors stated they believed Kuciak was killed to stop his investigation.

The impact of his work and death were immediate. Less than a month after his death, tens of thousands of Slovaks took to the streets to demand the resignation of then Prime Minister Robert Fico as the public called for an end to corruption. The protests continued in Bratislava and around the country for many months following Kuciak's murder; most recently an estimated 25,000 protesters rallied in central Bratislava to mark the first anniversary of his death.

Ultimately, the work of Kuciak and the protests that followed led to the resignation of Prime Minister Fico and several members of his cabinet. In recent elections Zuzana Caputova, the country's first

female head of state, was elected. During her campaign one of the key policies was that of protecting press freedom. Ms. Caputova also cited Ján Kuciak's murder as one of the reasons she decided to run for president.

Last month authorities in Slovakia charged Marián Kočner, one of Slovakia's richest men, with having ordered Kuciak's murder. Kuciak had previously received threatening phone calls from Kočner, which he had reported to the police – but his complaint was dismissed.

We continue to watch as the case progresses in the hope that justice will be served to those responsible.

Through the award we look to commemorate the death of nominees, honour the work and life of Kuciak and celebrate his legacy, and bring to the forefront the dangers facing journalists around the world.

Further Reading about Ján Kuciak

BBC: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-47756368>

BBC: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-47907620>

BBC: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-45684062>

Committee to Protect Journalists: <https://cpj.org/data/people/jan-kuciak/index.php>September

Deutsche Welle: <https://www.dw.com/en/slovak-journalist-jan-kuciaks-murder-sparks-eu-reactions/a-42807730>

Deutsche Welle: <https://www.dw.com/en/jan-kuciak-murder-slovakia-shaken-to-the-core-after-mafia-structures-revealed/a-42833645>

Euro news: <https://www.euronews.com/2019/04/12/jan-kuciak-murder-ex-soldier-confesses-to-killing-of-slovakian-journalist-and-his-fiancee>

Guardian: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/mar/15/slovakias-prime-minister-robert-fico-resigns-journalist-murder>

Guardian: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/apr/11/ex-soldier-charged-with-killing-slovak-journalist-said-to-have-confessed>

Journalism.co.uk: <https://www.journalism.co.uk/news/slovakia-s-first-investigative-journalism-centre-honours-legacy-of-murdered-reporter/s2/a736214/>

New York Times: <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/27/world/europe/slovakia-jan-kuciak-arrests.html>

Reuters: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-slovakia-crime-politics/largest-slovak-protests-in-decades-ratchet-up-pressure-on-pm-fico-idUSKCN1GL1DC>

Sky News: <https://news.sky.com/story/zuzana-caputova-anti-corruption-activist-known-as-slovakias-erin-brockovich-elected-president-11681269>

The Slovak Spectator: <https://spectator.sme.sk/c/22058930/protest-one-year-anniversary-murder-Kuciak-Kusnirova.html>

The Washington Post: https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/global-opinions/wp/2018/05/17/and-then-they-took-her-cellphone/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.ee4e65232c22