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EU Urges Afghan Government To Tackle Violence Against Journalists

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The European Union is urging all parties to the conflict in Afghanistan to “do their utmost” to protect press reporters, after a media watchdog said 2016 was the country’s “bloodiest year for journalists and media” in history.

“Freedom of the Media is key to any democracy — critical media holds government and administration accountable, ensures transparency in society and gives ordinary Afghan citizens a voice,” the EU special representative to Afghanistan, Franz-Michael Mellbin, said in a January 19 statement.

The comments come a day after the Afghan Journalists’ Safety Committee released a report saying at least 13 journalists were killed in 2016 and that the Taliban were behind no fewer than 10 of the deaths.

Overall, the committee recorded 101 cases involving killing, assault, intimidation, abuse, and wounding of journalists in 2016, a 38 percent increase on the previous year.

“A shift in the conduct of Taliban vis-a-vis journalists and media is the main driver of the increase in the level of threats and deadly violence against journalists,” it said.

But it added that “the government and security forces are responsible for most of the incidents involving beating of journalists.”

“It is alarming that the government continues to be responsible for so many cases,” Mellbin said.