

## Tip sheet

# Legal risks faced by journalists

Journalists are increasingly being silenced with legal action around the world, often in the form of SLAPPs.

## WHAT ARE SLAPPs?

**SLAPP** stands for **S**trategic **L**awsuit **A**gainst **P**ublic **P**articipation.

## HOW CAN YOU IDENTIFY A SLAPP?

- \* These suits are designed to wear you down and ultimately, silence your investigation.
- \* Clear imbalance of power between plaintiff & defendant
- \* Use of procedural movements to drive up costs
- \* Often pursue journalists, not media outlets
- \* A history of legal intimidation from plaintiff

## WHAT TO DO IF YOU RECEIVE A SLAPP

1. **Triple-check** your facts. It's much easier to defend yourself if your case is watertight.
2. When dealing with sensitive investigations, stories or issues, **consult a lawyer** pre-publication/broadcast.
3. If you receive a legal threat, **don't be shy**. Make it as public as you can.
4. **Seek financial support** to help with legal costs.

### Organisations offering legal funds:



FREELANCE  
INVESTIGATIVE  
REPORTERS +  
EDITORS



### Platforms to amplify your case when you've been targeted:



SAFETY OF  
JOURNALISTS



MAPPING  
MEDIA FREEDOM

NOTE: Registering your case will notify Council of Europe member states & the European Commission. Both platforms focus on the safety and intimidation of journalists.

## FURTHER RESOURCES

1. *NUJ Social media legal guide*
2. *Anti-SLAPP Legal Guide – USA*
3. *Reporters Without Borders & Thomson Reuters Foundation: Defence Handbook for Journalists & Bloggers*