

# THE CAR ACCIDENT IN WHICH JOURNALIST MILEN TSVETKOV DIED

Bulgaria



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# Key facts of the case

In April 2020, a SUV drove overspeed and hit into another car that had stopped at red light. The driver of the stopped car was a popular journalist who died soon after the ambulance came. The 22-year-old driver who caused the incident was shortly identified as he and two passengers had escaped the scene. His name and pictures were soon published in the media together with the information that he had taken drugs before the accident. His mother was arrested for allowing him to drive on drugs but later was released due to lack of evidence for committing a crime. The two passengers were also identified, one of them proving to be the son of a Bulgarian MP. During the first days of the investigation, the three refused to cooperate. The driver was left in custody. The death of a famous journalist together with the high public danger of the other driver's behaviour provoked intensive media and social response. Different details of his private and family life were published to present him as a spoiled child of a wealthy family who had systematically behaved irresponsibly. His social media pictures were published and he was labelled "a murderer", "a drug addict" who "sabotages the investigation".[1] His lawyer and the lawyer of his mother also made statements which fed media publications about their private lives.

## Applicable law

Initially, the crime was qualified under Art. 343, para 3 of the Penal Code (чл. 343, ал. 3, пр. 2, вр. ал.1, б. „в“, вр. чл. 342, ал. 1, пр. 3 от НК) [2] providing that a person who allows for breaching of traffic rules thus causing death after the use of drugs or alcohol, or has fled from the scene, shall

be punished by between five and twelve years of imprisonment. On 22 April 2020, however, the Prosecution changed the accusation being already under art. 342, para 3c of the Penal Code (чл. 342, ал. 3, б. „в“, във връзка с ал. 1, пр. 3 от НК), which already constitutes intentionally causing death when driving a vehicle and envisages between 15 and 20 years of imprisonment.[3]

The case was assigned to the Sofia City Court where, by law, serious crime proceedings were heard.

The other two passengers who were in the car during the accident were also accused that on April 21, 2020, they had deliberately concealed the truth regarding the facts and circumstances with the subject of proof in other criminal proceedings. They were brought to criminal responsibility under Art. 290, para. 1, item 2 of the Penal Code. The two were also given a cash bail in the amount of BGN 10,000 each, the Sofia District Prosecutor's Office announced.

The accused man's mother was arrested and investigated for giving him her company-owned car with which the accident took place, however under media reports,[5] the investigation has been terminated as it was proven that he had taken the car without his mother's knowledge. During the proceedings, the Prosecutor ordered an inspection on the funds with which the car had been purchased.



[1] <https://www.monitor.bg/bg/a/view/ubiecyt-na-milen-cvetkov-sabotira-razsledvaneto-212850>

[2] Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Bulgaria (2020) СГП ще поиска мярка за неотклонение „задържане под стража“ за привлечен като обвиняем водач на МПС, предизвикал ПТП след употреба на наркотични вещества и причинил смърт на друг участник в движението, 20 April 2020

[3] Nikodimov, Ivo (2020) Прокуратурата даде на съд Кристиан Николов за катастрофата с Милен Цветков, BNT News, 18 December 2020.

[4] [Debat.bg](https://www.debat.bg) (2020) Обвинения и за спътниците на Кристиан Николов, предизвикал смъртоносна катастрофа с Милен Цветков, 22 April 2020.

[5] [Bulgaria Today](https://www.bulgariatoday.com) (2020) Свалят обвинението срещу майката на Кристиан Николов, 3 November 2020.

# Criminal proceedings

Soon after the car accident on 19 April 2020, an eyewitness called 112 and an ambulance and Sofia Directorate of the Interior officials made it to the crime scene. They found no one in the car that caused the incident. A 22-year man was arrested on the same day. On the next day, the police arrested a 21-year-old man and a 21-year-old woman who were also in the car during the accident and who refused to cooperate with the authorities. The main suspect's mother was also arrested for 24 hours.

The 22-year-old driver was left in custody for 72 hours and then charged for causing a car accident under the influence of drugs.

By order of the Prosecutor General, the investigation was taken on a special report by the Supreme Prosecutor's Office of Cassation presumably due to the high public interest.[6]

On 23 April 2020, the Sofia City Court decided to leave the accused man in custody as there was "a substantiated assumption for the authorship of the criminal act, as well as that the accused may commit a new crime or abscond".[7] He did not initially appeal [8] the detention until January 2021 when he filed a request to the Sofia City Court for a change of the detention measure with house arrest. The request was rejected.

On 14 January 2021, the accused person filed a complaint at the Specialised Prosecutor's Office against, among all, one of the prosecutors and against one of the experts for abuse of office and disclosing information about the case.[9]

The Prosecutor's Office filed the indictment act on

18 December 2020.

In a dispositional hearing held on 21 January, the defense asked the court to order the prosecutor to withdraw for two reasons, both related to the publicity of information during the pre-trial phase: the defense lawyer cited the complaint he had filed against the prosecutor on 14 January, as well as media publications, according to which the prosecutor was present at a birthday party of the victim's lawyer.[10] At the hearing, the defendant's lawyer was reported to say: "He is not objective in the work on the case, he does not act within his powers to collect exculpatory evidence, he has not taken all measures to reveal the objective truth, he does not make his decisions based on his inner conviction" („Не е обективен в работата по делото, не действа в рамките на своите правомощия да събира и оневинителни доказателства, не е взел всички мерки за разкриване на обективната истина, не взема решенията си на основа на вътрешното си убеждение"). [11] The judge rejected the request with the motives that there is no sufficient evidence that the prosecutor had been biased. Within the motives, the judge said: "Media publications are diverse and the court cannot assess their authenticity. So the current panel of judges, in the absence of objective evidence to establish a close relationship between Prosecutor Kuchiev and lawyer Menkov, could not state that there is bias, prejudice or interest on the part of the prosecutor." („Медийните публикации са разнородни и съдът няма как да преценява тяхната достоверност. Така че настоящият съдебен състав, при липса на обективни доказателства, които да установяват близки отношения на прокурор Кучиев с адвокат Менков, не би могъл да изложи позиция, че е налице необективност, предубеденост или заинтересованост от прокурора").[12]

The first hearing was held on 23 February 2021.

[6] Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Bulgaria (2020) *СГП ще поиска мярка за неотклонение „задържане под стража“ за привлечен като обвиняем водач на МПС, предизвикал ПТП след употреба на наркотични вещества и причинил смърт на друг участник в движението*, 20 April 2020

[7] Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Bulgaria (2020) *Кристиан Николов, обвинен за тежко умишлено престъпление, отнело живота на журналиста Милен Цветков, остава в ареста*, 23 April 2020

[8] Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Bulgaria (2020) *Съобщение на Софийска градска прокуратура относно мярката за неотклонение на обвиняемия Кристиан Николов*, 29 May 2020

[9] Lex News (2021) *Съдът отказа да отведе прокурор от делото за смъртта на Милен Цветков*, 21 January 2021.

[10] See for example: Ilinska, Donka (2020) *Адвокат Менко Менков отпразнува 55 години с ВИП гости*, Galeria Newspaper, preprinted in the Glasove.com website, 21 October 2020. Both later denied being close and the prosecutor denied being present at the cited event.

[11] Lex News (2021) *Съдът отказа да отведе прокурор от делото за смъртта на Милен Цветков*, 21 January 2021.

[12] Lex News (2021) *Съдът отказа да отведе прокурор от делото за смъртта на Милен Цветков*, 21 January 2021.

# Disclosure of information

The day after the accident the Sofia Directorate of the Interior head was interviewed live in one of the most popular TV channels. [13] The interview was illustrated with footage of the remains of both cars at the accident scene while investigated by police officers. Asked about the personality of the perpetrator, the police head disclosed the arrested person's age, his city of residence, the fact that he had reacted positive when tested for cannabis and amphetamine use (later information came out for two more substances), the period for which he had been a licensed driver and the fact that he had a minor violation of traffic rules registered in the past. He added that the driver was arrested and a pre-trial proceeding was initiated under Art. 343b of the Penal Code for causing death after the use of alcohol and opiates which envisaged 3 to 15 years of imprisonment. He also disclosed data on oral reports of the investigating officers about the lack of braking distance. Asked to disclose the identity of the driver, the police officer refused to do so without the permission of the Prosecutor's Office.

On 26 April, the same officer was a guest in another popular TV channel where he shared additional information about the accident's investigation. There, he said that all CCTV cameras had been seized by the police and used to reconstruct the period before the incident took place. At that time, the media were already aware about the arrests of the two passengers in the car that caused the incident and their identities were already publicly announced, including the fact that the man was a son of a MP. The officer confirmed that that man had left the accident scene and that the driver's girlfriend was present in the car at the moment of the car crash, referring to them by their two names.

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had been seized by the police and used to reconstruct the period before the incident took place. At that time, the media were already aware about the arrests of the two passengers in the car that caused the incident and their identities were already publicly announced, including the fact that the man was a son of a MP. The officer confirmed that that man had left the accident scene and that the driver's girlfriend was present in the car at the moment of the car crash, referring to them by their two names.

The Sofia Police director also commented on the lawyer's words that it was yet not clear who had driven the car by saying that the police knew who was driving the car and that the defense was not "honest and correct" to use statements before the media to influence publicly the prosecution as their argument should be held in court. In his opinion, such claims publicly tried to cast doubt in the work of the investigative authorities.

Asked about what proved that precisely that man had driven the car, the Senior Commissioner said: *"There are also testimonies that indicate that he drove. In addition, a number of expert reports are currently being appointed, and one of the most important expert reports - DNA expertise - is about to be issued with its expert opinion. However, since the court has now ruled that there is sufficient evidence that he is the perpetrator of this act and has decided to keep him in custody permanently and impose the most severe measure on him, it can be reasonably assumed that he is the driver who caused this accident."* ("Има и свидетелски показания, които посочват, че той е карал. Освен това в момента има назначени множество експертизи, като една от най-важните експертизи - ДНК експертизата - предстои да излезе със своето експертно заключение. Но след като към настоящия момент и съда е преценил, че има достатъчно данни той да е автор на това деяние и е преценил да го остави за постоянно в ареста и да му наложи най-тежката мярка, може да се направи обосновано предположение, че той е шофьорът, който е причинил това пътнотранспортно произшествие."). [15] Later, he added: *"It is clear to us who is the perpetrator of this act"* ("За нас е ясно кой е

[13] Nova TV (2020) *Задържан е шофьорът, предизвикал жестоката катастрофа, при която загина Милен Цветков*, 20 April 2020.

[14] bTV (2020) *Ст. комисар Георги Хаджиев за фактите около сблъсъка, при който загина Милен Цветков*, 26 April 2020.

[15] bTV (2020) *Ст. комисар Георги Хаджиев за фактите около сблъсъка, при който загина Милен Цветков*, 26 April 2020.(3:50 to 4:23)

авторът на това деяние.”) [16].

In the same interview the Senior Commissioner commented on a telephone interview given by the male passenger in the car in which the passenger claimed that he had been forced to sign testimony incriminating the accused driver. In his opinion, the witness' statement was an attempt of the defense to use the media to dishonestly try to influence the accusation by instilling mistrust in the law enforcement institutions.

The police officer also commented what would be the effect of the detected drugs on a driver saying that after such combination of drugs a driver could not be adequate behind the wheel.

On 28 and 29 April 2020, the Police published two identical news items at their website calling for every pedestrian who had crossed the street of the accident at the same day and who had witnessed the crash, to connect to the police.[17] This invitation was published in many media.

The Prosecutor's Office published several statements at the news section of their website.

In one of them, the Prosecutor's Office informed about its intention to ask for permanent detention of a person who was a defendant for causing death by a car accident after the use of drugs.[18] In the press-statement, the Prosecutor's Office referred to the defendant with his two names, disclosed his car's brand and gave some basic details about the crime, most of which were already aired in media. It informed about the positive drug test and the previous traffic violation of the person. Additional information was brought out related to the ownership of the car by a commercial company owned by the defendant's mother – the Prosecutor's Office informed about assigning to the Economic police to check the origin of the funds with which the car was bought.

Prosecutor's Office website inform about the change of the article under which the defendant

was accused with a graver one, namely intentionally causing death, as the case was particularly severe due to the use of drugs and had endangered the life of many other people, and envisaged heavier punishment. The message refers to the numerous media requests to be present at the custody measure hearing asking them to refer to the Chairperson of the Supreme Court of Cassation to obtain permission to access the building where the hearing would be held.

On 23 April, another Prosecution's press statement on the Office's website[20] informed about the court's decision to leave the defendant in custody. The statement's background information is written in a way that suggests the defendant's guilt has already been proven. It literary reads: *"The criminal act was committed by him around 6 pm on April 19, 2020, in the area of the intersection of Henrik Ibsen Street with Cherni Vrah Blvd. in the capital. While driving a motor vehicle - Audi Q7, the 22-year-old man violated the traffic rules under the Road Traffic Act, driving at a speed above the permitted limit and did not stop when approaching the intersection at a red signal of the traffic lights, due to on which he deliberately caused the death of Milen Tsvetkov. The case is particularly serious because the perpetrator drove a motor vehicle after using various types of drugs - amphetamine, marijuana, cocaine and bromazepam. He endangered the lives and health of many participants in the movement, as the act was committed in a busy place."* (Престъпното деяние било извършено от него около 18 ч. на 19.04.2020 г., в района на кръстовището на ул. „Хенрик Ибсен“ с бул. „Черни връх“ в столицата. При управление на моторно превозно средство - лек автомобил Audi Q7, 22-годишният мъж нарушил правилата за движение по Закона за движението по пътищата, като се е движил със скорост над разрешената и не спрял при приближаване на кръстовището при червен сигнал на светофарната уредба, вследствие на което умишлено е причинил смъртта на Milen Tsvetkov. Случаят е особено тежък, тъй като деецът е управлявал моторно превозно

[16] bTV (2020) *Ст. комисар Георги Хаджиев за фактите около сблъсъка, при който загина Milen Tsvetkov*, 26 April 2020.(6:50)

[17] Ministry of the Interior (2020) *Съобщение на полицията*, 29 April 2020.

[18] Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Bulgaria (2020) *СПП ще поиска мярка за неотклонение „задържане под стража“ за привлечен като обвиняем водач на МПС, предизвикал ПТП след употреба на наркотични вещества и причинил смърт на друг участник в движението*, 20 April 2020

[19] Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Bulgaria (2020) *Прокуратурата обвини Кристиан Николов за умишлено причиняване на смъртта на журналиста Milen Tsvetkov, като случаят е особено тежък*, 22 April 2020.

[20] Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Bulgaria (2020) *Кристиан Николов, обвинен за тежко умишлено престъпление, отнело живота на журналиста Milen Tsvetkov, остава в ареста*, 23 April 2020

The article was accompanied by a number of personal photos, derived from their social media profiles – a photo from the suspect's graduation where he was with his mother, pictures from family holidays, mother's public appearances with famous people.

As soon as the name of the arrested person who presumably drove the car came out to the media, more different details about his life came up – people who were somehow related to him told stories about him that were not quite relevant to the case but rather fed his image of a spoiled son of rich people whose parents' money and power allowed him to be arrogant and break rules. For example, bTV published material with the headline: *"Young, reckless and drugged - the profile of the young people from the accident with Milen Tsvetkov"* (*"Млади, безразсъдни и дрогирани - профилът на младежите от катастрофата с Милен Цветков"*)[26] where the accused was claimed to have committed several misdemeanors – drawing offensive graffiti and stealing from a supermarket for which he was removed from his school. He joined a more prestigious school. His friend, a son of a Bulgarian MP, was also in the spotlight for his background and for having been sentenced to probation for a theft from a gas station. *"Most likely, this boy believed that he would evade justice and he believed that he would once again outwit the system. They looked at it all as a TV game - you press 'undo' and restart."* (*"Най-вероятно това момче е вярвало, че ще избегне правосъдие и си е вярвало, че за пореден път ще надхитри системата. Те са гледали на всичко това като на телевизионна игра - натискаш 'Undo' и рестартираш."*), a psychologist commented in the TV studio.

The media and the education authorities continued to investigate how the accused was moved to a more elite school. The media refuted the previous information that he had been expelled from school for a violation and informed that he had been moved by the request of his mother and with the permission of a then deputy Minister of Education.

first hearing, the accused's girlfriend who was present during the accident was questioned.

## Media coverage

The death of a prominent journalist and particularly the way that he lost his life – unaware of being in danger while waiting at red light in his car – shocked the public and triggered intensive reactions among the media industry. At first, media coverage was directed towards the tragedy of the journalist but as long as arrests were made, the attention was shifted towards the personality of the arrested person and those around him digging behind the reason for the incident. Details about the alleged driver, his personal life, and his past, as well as those of his companions, came out in the media fast. Furthermore, the financial status of the accused together with the fact that he allowed himself to drive on drugs ignited public opinion against him.

The name of the suspected person first came out in the online news agency PIK, known for its tabloid-type publications, on the day after the incident. By then, the witnesses and the CCTV footages have revealed the car registration number, however, neither the police nor other sources shared a name associated with it. The mentioned publication was extensive material about the suspect's family, their companies and links with political figures. [25]



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The media and the education authorities continued to investigate how the accused was moved to a more elite school.[27] The media refuted the previous information that he had been expelled from school for a violation and informed that he had been moved by the request of his mother and with the permission of a then deputy Minister of Education.

Another media interviewed the grandmother of the accused citing her words that she was of course blaming him for what happened.[28]

There were accusing headlines even in media that sustain high ethics standards, such as the public media. The Bulgarian National Radio published a news item on its website about filing the indictment act with the headline “The prosecutor's office brought to court Christian Nikolov, who caused the death of Milen Tsvetkov” (Прокуратурата даде на съд Кристиан Николов, причинил смъртта на Милен Цветков) [29] publishing his picture looking down and chained among court guards on his way to the courtroom. Another article uses the qualifications “murderer” (убиецът), „a rich man's son” (богаташко синче), „a left lane vigilante” (джигит). [30] Another media article literary read: “The 22-year-old left-line vigilante Christian Nikolov, who killed the popular journalist Milen Tsvetkov on Easter, after being intoxicated with several types of drugs, by hitting victim's "Subaru" at a red traffic light, without even trying to reduce his speed from over 100 km/h, according to the calculations of specialists, demonstrated insolence in court. (“Наглост демонстрира 22-годишният джигит Кристиан Николов, който навръх Великден уби популярния журналист Милен Цветков, след като надрусан с няколко вида наркотици блъсна отзад "Субару"-то на жертвата на червен светофар, без дори да опита да намали скоростта си от над 100 км/ч, по изчисленията на специалисти.) [31]



[26] bTV (2020) *Млади, безразсъдни и дрогирани - профилът на младежите от катастрофата с Милен Цветков*, 21 April 2020.

[27] Markaryan, Alexandra (2020) *Как шофьорът на джипа, убил Милен Цветков, влезе в най-елитното училище по социални причини*, OffNews, 22 May 2020.

[28] Varna24 (2020) *Бабата на Кристиан, който уби с джипа си Милен Цветков: Виня го, разбира се, това не трябваше да се случи*, 18 December 2020.

[29] Bulgarian National Radio (2020) *Прокуратурата даде на съд Кристиан Николов, причинил смъртта на Милен Цветков*, 18 December 2020.

[30] Novinite.bg (2021) *Убиецът на Милен Цветков: Ще окажа съдействие в процеса, но искам въщи*, 8 January 2021.

[31] iNews.bg (2020) *Друсаният убиец на Милен Цветков с първи думи, поиска въщи! Адвокатът: Не се знае кой е карал Аудито*, 23 April 2020.

Soon after the incident, a number of CCTV footages from the neighboring commercial buildings leaked in the social networks showing the incident and how a number of pedestrians were very close to being hit by the crashing cars. [32] The shots were added as evidence to the investigation, but their publishing magnified immensely the public's rage against the alleged perpetrator. Moreover, private on-dash camera shots were released in social and mainstream media to show the same car had done previous road violations. [33]

The two passengers in the car were also in the focus of many media articles – information from tabloid websites was republished by mainstream media citing details of their lives and airing social media photos.[34] An article about the accused person's girlfriend who was in the car during the accident read: *"Simona's photos and profile on Facebook have become one of the most shared things on the Internet. Hours ago, the girl's profile was deleted, but to put it mildly, the scandalous photos of her, having in mind the drugs found in Christian's blood, have already become widespread. Her appearance on the photos - tattoos, piercings, dilated pupils - became the reason for many to describe her as a person who knows what drugs are."* ("Снимките на Симона и профилът ѝ във Фейсбук станаха едно от най-споделяните неща в интернет пространството. Преди часове профилът на момичето е изтрит, но меко казано скандални нейни снимки с оглед откритите наркотици в кръвта на Кристиан, вече са разпространени широко в интернет. Видът ѝ на фотосите – татуси, пийърсинги, разширени зеници – станаха повод мнозина да я окачествят като човек, на когото дрогата не му е непозната.") [35]

The media and the education authorities continued to investigate how the accused was moved to a more elite school. The media refuted the previous information that he had been expelled from school for a violation and informed that he had been moved by the request of his mother and with the permission of a then deputy Minister of Education.

Another media interviewed the grandmother of the accused citing her words that she was of course blaming him for what happened.

At the first court hearing, the girl was the one to testify first. As court hearings were open, the media were present in the courtroom and reported in detail her testimony. Some found discrepancies with what she had previously said. [36]

A number of experts in psychology, criminology, and prominent lawyers, as well as eyewitnesses and people related to the accused person and his companions, were interviewed and presented their points of view on the incident throughout the different phases of the project. Media interest seemed to increase, besides immediately after the incident, when there were court hearings or developments on the case.

## Impact on the suspect or accused person and on the general public

The enormous public reaction following the car crash affected the life of the suspect and his family and friends. His mother and the passengers in the car were also accused. The financial status of his family and the fact that one of his companion was a son of a Bulgarian MP provoked negative public attitude suggesting that the spoiled children of rich people could do whatever they want and their parents' power

[32] Nova TV (2020) ШОКИРАЩИ КАДРИ: Шестима души пресичали кръстовището в момента на катастрофата с Милен Цветков, 21 April 2020.

[33] Nikolaeva, Marieta (2020) Джилът, с който е ударен Милен Цветков, е собственост на фирма, 20 April 2020.

[34] Secret.bg (2020) Фейсбук изригна срещу убиеца на Милен Цветков, ето кой е той. 20 April 2020.

[35] Български новини (2020) Вижте приятелката на Кристиан Николов, смазал колата на Милен Цветков, 21 April 2020.

[36] Milanov, Stefan. (2021) Младежите преди катастрофата с Милен Цветков: само шотче и кюфтета, Club Z, 23 February 2021.

allowed them to get away with it. That was also the sense of the readers' comments on the social media and in online media's comment sections. Comments, such as: "Now, if this son of an oligarch and a man of power does not go to prison for a very long time, let's just close the state. Been on drugs, killed a person - for this in many countries [he gets] death penalty and in most others life imprisonment." *Сега ако този син на олигарх и човек на властта не влезе в затвора за много дълго време, направо да затваряме държавата. Наркотици, убил човек - за това в много държави [получава] смъртно наказание и в повечето други доживотен затвор.*) [37]

The entire family deleted their Facebook profiles right after the alleged driver's name got public. His mother and his sister's photos and screenshots from their publications were nonetheless published in media with the headline: "Uncovered themselves: Milen Tsvetkov's killer and his mother hid from Facebook after the PIC revealed that Christian was the drugged driver from the hellish mess (photos)" ("Издадоха се: Убиецът на Милен Цветков и майка му се скриха от фейсбук след разкритието на ПИК, че Кристиан е дрогираният шофьор от адското меле (СНИМКИ)"). [38]

An article went as far as being dedicated to the accused person's house with neighbours complaining from the loud noise coming from the parties that took part there and from a chicken coop that the family had. The chicken coop was reported to be removed after the noise around the car accident. [39]

In October 2020, 168 Chasa publishes an article with the headline "Milen Tsvetkov's killer was a drug specialist, discussing with friends their effects on the brain and body" ("Убиецът на Милен Цветков бил спец по drogите, обсъждал с приятели ефектите върху мозъка и тялото") [40]

In another article, dated 18 January 2021, the

same media published an apology requested by the affected person. [41] In the apology, the media explained that they have received a notary invitation in which the accused person asked the media to apologise for four untrue statements, as well as to settle the parameters of potential compensation. In the invitation, the media reported, the defendant claimed he had felt "collapsed" and "devastated" and "his mental health suddenly worsened" after reading the cited publication. In the apology, the media refuted one of the statements that it admitted was untrue and presented its point of view on the incident coverage. One of its statements is particularly relevant to the scope of this project, so it will be cited in its entirety: „We do not have access to the case materials because we are not parties. We rely on the legal information.“ ("Ние нямаме достъп до материалите по делото, тъй като не сме страна. Разчитаме на устна информация.") [42] It raises questions about to which extent the journalist's work should include checking of information and which part of it should journalists publish if it is not confirmed by official sources.

The car crash provoked public debate on the relevance of the punishments against those who drove on drugs. A petition was organized requiring a maximum term of punishment for "the drugged driver who killed Milen Tsvetkov", as well as for higher sanction for those who drove under intoxication. [43] The petition was signed by over 25,000 people. The ruling parties GERB and VMRO, the Prosecutor's office, the Bulgarian Association of Accident Victims, and experts proposed amendments to the Penal Code in that sense. The Prosecutor's Office proposed punishment of 15 to 20 years of imprisonment or a life sentence and confiscation of the vehicle for people who drove overspeed under the influence of alcohol or drugs and thus caused the death of a person.[44] As of February 2021, such amendments have not been votes.

[38] PИК (2020) *Издадоха се: Убиецът на Милен Цветков и майка му се скриха от фейсбук след разкритието на ПИК, че Кристиан е дрогираният шофьор от адското меле (СНИМКИ)*, 20 April 2020.

[39] Peshev, Ivan Dimotrov (2020) *Убиецът на Милен Цветков тормозел съседите си*. *Novinii.bg*, 7 June 2020.

[40] Tankinska, Tsvetelina (2020) *Убиецът на Милен Цветков бил спец по drogите, обсъждал с приятели ефектите върху мозъка и тялото*, 168 Chasa, 7 October 2020. The article, accessed on 15 February 2021, might be edited after the person concerned requested for rebuttal.

[41] 168 Chasa (2021) *Обвиняемият за смъртта на Милен Цветков: Опустошен съм след публикация в "168 часа"*, 18 January 2021.

[42] 168 Chasa (2021) *Обвиняемият за смъртта на Милен Цветков: Опустошен съм след публикация в "168 часа"*, 18 January 2021.

[43] ПЕТИЦИЯ С ИСКАНЕ ЗА МАКСИМАЛНО НАКАЗАНИЕ ЗА ДРОГИРАНИЯ ШОФЬОР УБИЛ МИЛЕН ЦВЕТКОВ! И УВЕЛИЧАВАНЕ НА НАКАЗАНИЕТО ЗА ШОФИРАНЕ В НЕТРЕЗВО СЪСТОЯНИЕ!

[44] Zhikov, Georgi (2020) *Ще бъдат ли прилагани по-строги наказания за дрогирани и пияни шофьори?*, BNR, 18 May 2020. 44