

Strasbourg, 18 August 2021

Dear Director Gruden,

With reference to alert No. 139/2021 "ORF Journalists Insulted During Covid-19 Denial Protest in Vienna" created on 8 July 2021 on the *Platform to promote the protection of journalism and safety of journalists*, I have the honor to transmit herewith the response by the Austrian authorities:

"General Remarks

Due to the increased number of complaints by journalists that the freedom of the press were violated during demonstrations, immediate measures were taken by the Vienna Police Directorate (LPD Vienna) to increase their protection:

- First, media contact officers were set up as the first point of contact for journalists after alleged restrictions, as well as for the initial recording of criminal offenses or administrative offenses. This measure has already proven very successful.
- Second, the on-going police evaluation of the situation includes possible tensions between demonstrators and present media representatives that could require action.
- Third, the LPD Vienna offers a de-escalation training tailored for journalists in order to increase safety by avoiding misunderstandings and threats.

To conclude, the Austrian police can assure that they intervene immediately if dangerous attacks on journalists are perceived or when they are requested to stop them. The police provides first aid and takes care of the criminal prosecution of the offense (reporting of reports, preservation of evidence, measures to investigate the accused and informing the victims about their rights in the proceedings).

Special Remarks

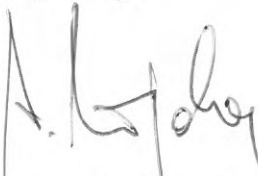
Concerning the Case „ORF Journalists Insulted During Covid-19 Denial Protest in Vienna“ (8 July 2021) the Police of Vienna provided the following information (translated by the MoI):

According to a report by the City Police Command (SPK) Meidling, around 20 participants attended the meeting. On site, a uniformed Police officer was in on-

going contact with both sides, the ORF security service and the organizer of this demonstration. Only two complaints reached the Police concerning this incident, one about the alleged noise caused by the slogans being chanted and another concerning a vehicle parked in this area. No ORF employee or journalist complained to the Police about the content of banners or slogans during or after this demonstration so far. The Police cannot answer the legal question whether and which slogans of this demonstration were within the permissible range of the freedom of expression.”

I should be grateful for your publishing this response on the Platform website.

Sincerely,



Alexander WOJDA
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

Mr
Matjaž GRUDEN
Director, Directorate of Democratic Participation
Council of Europe - Conseil de l'Europe
F-67075 Strasbourg Cedex
matjaz.gruden@coe.int