

Strasbourg, 19 August 2021

Dear Director Gruden,

With reference to alert No. 39/2021 “Photojournalists Documenting Anti-lockdown Protest Threatened, Insulted and Obstructed” created on 12 March 2021 on the *Platform to promote the protection of journalism and safety of journalists*, I have once more 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 has been violated during demonstrations, immediate measures were taken by the Vienna Police Directorate (LPD Vienna) to increase their protection:

- First, media contact officers have been 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 wishes to assure that they intervene immediately if dangerous attacks on journalists are perceived or when they are requested to stop them. The police provide first aid and take 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

Regarding the Case „Photojournalists Documenting Anti-lockdown Protests Threatened, Insulted and Obstructed“, according to the information provided by the police, no investigations are pending so far.

In the course of this demonstration, several tumultuous scenes were indeed perceived. However, there was no police awareness of attacks on journalists and no complaints in

this regard have been filed with the police. Therefore, it is not possible to objectify the information as recorded in the media alert no 39/2021 at the moment.”

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