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Council of Europe
Platform to promote the protection of Journalism and safety of Journalists
528 Avenue de L'Europe
Strasbourg, France

By e-transmission only

Date 01-03-2021
Concerning Reply of the Kingdom of the Netherlands concerning an Alert on the
Journalist platform of the Council of Europe (n° 11/2021)

Dear Mr. Gruden,

Our Ambassador to the Council of Europe duly notified to us the alert inserted to the Platform on 26 January 2020 on coverage concerning "Journalists and Media Workers Assaulted During Protests". We herewith would like to take the opportunity to respond to it.

The reported instance has been profoundly condemned by the Dutch authorities. Aggression and violence against journalists is regarded as unacceptable. The police and public prosecution take these, and comparable matters, very seriously. Press freedom is an essential pillar of our democracy. Journalists play an indispensable role in open and democratic societies like ours. Freedom of expression, online and offline, including safety of journalists, is a priority in the human rights policy of the Netherlands.

In response to reports of the harassment of journalists during protests on January 23d and 24th, the police has started an investigation. The police prioritizes cases concerning aggression and violence against journalists, and so does the public prosecutor. Further, the public prosecution service now applies a higher penalty when an assault case concerns a journalist (+200% demand in punishment). This is set out in a guideline.¹ This provides a clear signal that violence against journalists is not tolerated. In addition, the Dutch police has recently adopted a complimentary protocol in which the course of action is described in case a journalist requests advice on safety of working conditions, prior to an event, demonstration or reporting.

Finally, in 2019 closer cooperation between police, public prosecutor, the Dutch Editors-in-chief Society and Dutch society of journalists to enhance coordination and communication has started. This is regarded by parties as necessary and successful. At the heart of the close cooperation between the parties is the understanding that prevention is better than punishment. Therefore the Dutch society of journalists *inter alia* offers training and information on preventive measures. With knowledge and awareness journalists are made more resilient to aggression and violence.

¹ Aanwijzing kader voor strafvordering meerderjarigen (2019A003):
<https://www.om.nl/onderwerpen/beleidsregels/richtlijnen-voor-strafvordering-resultaten/aanwijzing-kader-voor-strafvordering>.

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Reference

Nr. 11/2021

*Please quote date of letter
and ref. when replying. Do not
raise more than one subject
per letter.*

Yours sincerely,



R. Huijser

Director of the Directorate of European and International Affairs

**European and
International Affairs
Department**

Date
1 March 2021

Our reference
Nr. 11/2021