



Royaume des Pays-Bas

Mr Matjaž Gruden
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Représentation
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By e-transmission only

Date : 22 June 2022

Ref: STR-042/2022

Obj : Reply by the Kingdom of the Netherlands concerning an alert on
the Safety of Journalists Platform of the Council of Europe
(no. 203/2021)

Dear Mr Gruden,

With apologies for the delay incurred in replying to the alert created on 13 October 2021 concerning the arrest of De Volkskrant journalist Mr van Dinther while covering a protest by the environmentalist group Extinction Rebellion in The Hague, I should inform you as follows.

In this specific case, Mr Van Dinther was detained on suspicion of obstructing and insulting police officers. During the Extinction Rebellion protest, Mr Van Dinther was initially requested to keep a safe distance from the police officers who were in the process of removing protestors from the area. According to information from the Public Prosecutor's Office, Mr Van Dinther did not follow the instructions given by the police; he entered into a discussion with the officers and ultimately failed to cooperate as requested, after which he was arrested for four hours. The next day, the Public Prosecutor's Office announced that Mr Van Dinther's case had been dismissed.

On 14 December 2021, the Minister of Justice and Security responded to written questions submitted by Dutch MP Frank Wassenberg on the incident involving Mr Van Dinther.¹

¹ Questions asked by Members of the House of Representatives, with the answers given by the government,
<https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/kamervragen/detail?id=2021Z17984&did=2021D49770>, 14 December 2021.

In his response, the Minister stated that the police follow internal instructions to protect the freedoms and rights of journalists. In cases where public order is disturbed or threatens to be disturbed, the police can proceed to arrest those present at a particular location. In the event of large-scale disturbances of public order, or threats thereof, it is possible that a person's journalistic status can only be determined after they have been arrested. An assessment of their arrest will then be made later, in which their journalistic status will always be taken into account.

Press freedom is an essential pillar of our democracy. Journalists play an indispensable role in open and democratic societies like ours. Freedom of expression, both online and offline, including the safety of journalists, is a priority of Dutch human rights policy. That is why as of 1 January 2022, the Netherlands is the co-chair of the Media Freedom Coalition. Also in the context of this chairmanship, the government will work to prevent attacks and violence against journalists and the media, to better protect journalists and to combat impunity for violence against journalists.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Roeland Böcker', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Roeland Böcker

Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of the Netherlands
to the Council of Europe