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Mr Matjaž Gruden
Council of Europe
Platform to promote the protection of Journalism and safety of Journalists
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Strasbourg, France
Frankrijk

**European and
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Department**

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Our reference

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

Date 24 April 2024
Concerning Reply of the Kingdom of the Netherlands concerning an alert on the
Journalist platform of the Council of Europe (no.232/2023)

Dear Mr Gruden,

The Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the Council of Europe has notified us of the alert created on 18 October 2023. This alert concerns the suing of the *Financieele Dagblad* (hereinafter FD), a business and finance newspaper, and its editor-in-chief, Perry Feenstra, by Willem Blijdorp. Mr. Blijdorp is the founder and majority shareholder of the wholesale company B&S.

Mr Blijdorp sued the FD and Perry Feenstra in a civil defamation case over two articles published on 2 and 3 November 2022, about his investments in Iranian quarries. Mr Blijdorp accuses the FD of acting unlawfully stating that the articles wrongly accuse him of violating American sanctions rules and the deployment of B&S employees in this regard. Mr Blijdorp also accuses the FD of unlawfully gathering information for the publication of these two articles.

In assessing this, the court balanced the FD's freedom of expression with Mr Blijdorp's right to respect for privacy and concluded that the FD is allowed to publish about possible risks for B&S shareholders as a result of his past investments in Iran. Thus, the Nov. 2, 2022 article is lawful according to the court. The article of Nov. 3, 2022, is partly unlawful because it cannot be determined whether the expert consulted by the FD was quoted correctly. For that part, the FD will have to post a rectification.¹

The Netherlands recognizes the vital role of journalism in upholding democratic values and promoting transparency and accountability. The free flow of information is highly valued and essential for ensuring the integrity of democratic institutions and holding those in power accountable. In the Netherlands, the importance of journalism is underscored by its support for press freedom and its condemnation of

¹ [ECLI:NL:RBAMS:2024:319, Rechtbank Amsterdam, C/13/732333 / HA ZA 23-365 \(rechtspraak.nl\)](https://eclj.europa.eu/document/docid/62024319/doclang/en/docformat/html/docpart/1/docdate/20240424/docsource/other/doccomment/1)



any attempts to hinder the work of journalists. Through a strong commitment to fostering an environment where investigative reporting can thrive, the Netherlands demonstrates its dedication to upholding democratic principles and ensuring the public's right to know.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read 'Ballegooij', is written over a faint, light blue circular watermark or stamp.

Gerard van Ballegooij
Director of European and International Affairs