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Council of Europe
Platform to promote the protection of Journalism and safety of Journalists
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By e-transmission only

**Directorate of European
and International Affairs**

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Date 01-03-2021
Concerning Reply of the Kingdom of the Netherlands concerning an Alert on the
Journalist platform of the Council of Europe (nr. 10/2021)

Reference
Nr. 10/2021

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

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 the online video in which NOS journalists are advised to "Flee the Netherlands". We herewith would like to take the opportunity to respond to it.

The reported instance has been firmly condemned by the Dutch authorities. Aggression and violence against journalists is regarded as unacceptable. The Dutch police and public prosecution take these, and comparable matters, very seriously. Press freedom is an essential pillar of our democracy. Journalists play an indispensable and important 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.

With regards to the case concerning mr. Laken, the authorities cannot make any statements as this case is still under investigation by the police and the public prosecution office.

In general the following can be said with regard to incidents of assaulted journalists and media workers. These assaults are not tolerated by the responsible authorities. Against this background close cooperation between police, public prosecutor, the Dutch Editors-in-chief Society and Dutch society of journalists to enhance coordination and communication has started in 2019. This is regarded by parties as necessary and successful. 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

At the end of the day we rather prevent than punish. 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>.

Yours sincerely,



R. Huijser

Director of the Directorate of European and International Affairs

**Directorate of European
and International Affairs**

Datum

1 maart 2021

Ons kenmerk

Nr. 10/2021