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Council of Europe  
Platform to promote the protection of Journalism and safety of Journalists  
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Strasbourg, France

*By e-transmission only*

**Directorate of European  
and International Affairs**

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Date 01-06-2021  
Concerning Reply of the Kingdom of the Netherlands concerning an Alert on the  
Journalist platform of the Council of Europe (n° 74/2021)

**Reference**  
n° 74/2021

*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 with the title "Photographer's Car Sent into the Ditch". We herewith would like to take the opportunity to respond to it.

The reported instance, as are all instances of aggression and violence against journalists, has been condemned by the Dutch authorities. This is regarded as unacceptable. It is therefore that our 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.

With regards to this case, in which a press photographer while in his car, has been hit by a shovel and pushed into a ditch, the police have arrested three individuals, including the driver of the shovel. The investigation into the incident has started shortly afterwards, and is still ongoing. The court has extended the pre-trial detention of the driver with another 90 days, who according to the public prosecutor is a suspect of attempted manslaughter.

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 Society of Editors-in-Chief and the Dutch Association of Journalists to enhance coordination and communication has started in 2019. This is regarded by parties as necessary and successful.

A sound statement comes from adoption in protocols of an increased demand (+200%) in punishment by the public prosecutor if a case concerns a journalist, compared to the same criminal act as done to a regular civilian. This is set out in a guideline.<sup>1</sup>

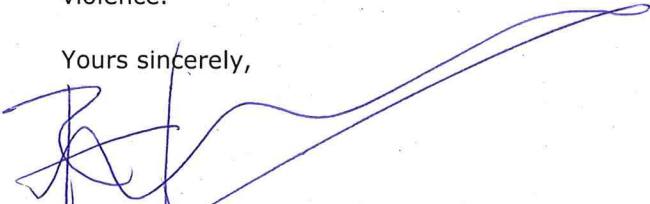
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<sup>1</sup> Aanwijzing kader voor strafvordering meerderjarigen (2019A003):  
<https://www.om.nl/onderwerpen/beleidsregels/richtlijnen-voor-strafvordering-resultaten/aanwijzing-kader-voor-strafvordering>.

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.

**European and  
International Affairs  
Department**

Yours sincerely,



R. Huijser  
Director of the Directorate of European and International Affairs