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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 9 July 2021
Re Alert on the journalist platform of the Council of Europe (n° 137/2021)

Dear Mr. Gruden,

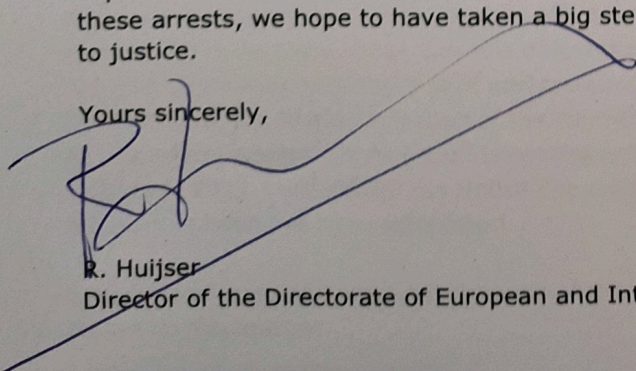
The Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the Council of Europe duly notified us of the alert posted on the Platform on 7 July 2021 concerning the attack on crime reporter and investigative journalist Peter R. de Vries.

In reply, I refer to the [letter](#) sent by the Minister of Justice and Security, Ferd Grapperhaus, to the House of Representatives on 7 July 2021 concerning the attack. An English translation is attached to this letter.

The attack on Peter R. de Vries in Amsterdam is shocking and incomprehensible. It was an attack on a courageous journalist and confidant of a crown witness in an important case against organized crime. As such, it was also an attack on the free press, which is vital to our democracy, to the rule of law and to our society. But as Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte stated on the night of the attack and the Minister of Justice and Security, Ferd Grapperhaus, reaffirmed in the above-mentioned letter to Parliament, our thoughts are first and foremost with Peter R. de Vries and his loved ones.

Three persons were arrested on the day of the attack. The Public Prosecution Service expects that two of them will soon be brought before an examining magistrate. With these arrests, we hope to have taken a big step forward in bringing those responsible to justice.

Yours sincerely,



R. Huijser

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Reference
n° 137/2021

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

Letter of 7 July 2021 from the Minister of Justice and Security, Ferd Grapperhaus, to the President of the House of Representatives, concerning the shooting of Peter R. de Vries.

On 6 July 2021 the Netherlands was shocked by the report that crime reporter Peter R. de Vries had been brutally shot in broad daylight in Amsterdam. Mr De Vries has been fighting for justice his entire life, but right now he is fighting for his own life. My sympathy goes out to his family and loved ones. I share their fervent hope that Mr De Vries will recover.

The criminal investigation into this cowardly act is, of course, a top priority for the Public Prosecution Service and the police. I understand that many people see this attack as yet another assault on the rule of law and free speech. I share these feelings, but at the same time it is important to carefully and effectively investigate the circumstances of this abhorrent event.

It goes without saying that a criminal investigation was instituted immediately. In their press conference last night, the Amsterdam mayor, police and public prosecutor announced that three suspects had been arrested. The Public Prosecution Service informed me today that two suspects have been remanded in police custody subject to the highest level of restrictions and will be brought before the examining magistrate on Friday. The third person, who was arrested in Amsterdam, is no longer a suspect in this investigation. As the investigation is still ongoing I cannot – as the House will know – say any more about it.

While I cannot predict the outcome of the investigation, I can say that this horrific act strikes at the very foundations of our rule of law and our free society. It is a huge blow, particularly to the journalism profession. In the past two days I have been in contact with many journalists, including crime reporters, and my fellow minister Arie Slob and I have spoken with the Dutch Society of Editors-in-Chief and the Netherlands Union of Journalists. Minister for Legal Protection Sander Dekker and I also spoke with the Netherlands Bar Association and the Council for the Judiciary today. As you will understand, there is a great sense of sorrow, outrage and anger among the members of these professions. In our conversations we talked about their safety and resilience. The ministers in question and the professional associations hold constructive talks on a regular basis. My ministry provides financial support for this, as part of our broad offensive against crime that undermines society. The cowardly attack on Mr De Vries was also a great shock to those who had been involved in making a television programme with him shortly before. The mayor of Amsterdam and I will visit the presenters, production staff and crew of *RTL Boulevard* this evening to convey our support.

It is important to conduct a careful and effective investigation into the circumstances of this extremely shocking event. Pending the conclusions of the investigation, security measures have been ramped up. As I informed the House previously,¹ the Surveillance and Protection System is faced with cases that have become more complex and lengthy, and more extreme in terms of scope and severity. Excessive violence against office holders, lawyers, journalists and others in our democratic state governed by the rule of law is no longer a taboo. Currently the first stage of capacity expansion in terms of staff and resources is under way for every component of the system. Furthermore, the advisory opinion of the committee charged with making recommendations on how to render the system future-proof² is nearing completion and is expected to be issued no later than 1 October 2021. I will inform the House about the outcome and the next steps to be taken once the advisory opinion has been completed.

In so far as it is possible and the interests of the criminal investigation allow it, I will update the House on this matter.

¹ Parliamentary Paper 29 911, no. 281.

² Parliamentary Paper 29 911, no. 292.