

Strasbourg, 07 July 2021

The Media Working Group in the European Parliament

We, the undersigned members of the Media Working Group in the European Parliament are extremely appalled by and strongly condemn the attack against one of the most well-known European investigative journalists, Peter R. de Vries, who was shot and severely wounded yesterday, as he was leaving a TV studio in the busy Leideseplein square area of Amsterdam.

Mr. de Vries is one of the most renowned Dutch and European investigative journalists, having conducted heavy investigations, which created great impact, against prominent members of organised crime groups. Through his investigations, Mr. de Vries has looked into notorious cases of kidnapping and has exposed criminal groups, including large-scale drug-dealing organisations, helping to their dismantling.

Mr. de Vries has been a keen defender of democracy and justice, in spite of the many very serious threats that he had received over the years, demonstrating great courage and enormous dedication to his profession and to exposing the truth. Yesterday however, one of these threats materialised and he was severely injured, after 5 bullets were shot at his body and head, having been taken to hospital in serious condition.

Over the past years, the overall climate concerning the safety of journalists has dramatically declined in the European Union. Attacks that have left journalists dead in retaliation for their investigations and their stories have become more and more common. The EU, once considered one of the safest spaces for investigative journalism, is clearly not sufficiently well equipped to guarantee the safety of all journalists who expose wrongdoing, especially the activities of organised crime groups.

We therefore first call on the relevant Dutch authorities to thoroughly investigate this case, identifying both the perpetrators and those who ordered this appalling attack, bringing them to justice.

At the same time, we call on the European Commission to take note of the seriousness of the situation concerning the safety of journalists in the EU and commit, from the highest level, to addressing this issue through a comprehensive European strategy and legislation on the matter. We cannot allow people who stand up for EU values such as freedom of expression and freedom of information to constantly risk their lives for defending democracy and justice.

Yesterday was another black day for journalism and for all those who stand up for our rights and values as citizens of a democratic EU. Safeguarding freedom of expression and of information has now become a battle between life and death. Providing a safe space for journalists and ensuring that such attacks cannot happen again is absolutely crucial for protecting our democracy, rights and values.



European Parliament

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