



November 14, 2019

M. Jean Roudy Aly
Minister of Justice and Public Security

CC:
M. Normil Rameau
National Police chief of Haiti

M. Joany Canéus
Head of Haiti's judicial police (DCPJ)

Dear Minister Aly,

The Committee to Protect Journalists and Reporters Without Borders, independent press freedom advocacy organizations, write to express our concern about increasing threats and violence against the press in Haiti, and the failure of government officials to adequately respond. We urge you to use your authority as Minister of Justice and Public Security to take the steps necessary to guarantee independent and comprehensive investigations into all cases of violence against journalists, and communicate the results to the public in a timely manner.

Over the last two years, CPJ, RSF, and local organizations such as the Association of Haitian Journalists have documented an uptick in violence against Haitian journalists and media workers. On multiple occasions, journalists covering breaking political news or protests have been shot at by protesters, security forces, and even elected officials. In a recent one-week span, Senator Jean Marie Ralph Féthière injured journalist Chery Dieu-Nalio after firing a pistol into a crowd of demonstrators, and a police officer wounded cameraman Edmond Agenor Joseph during clashes in Port-au-Prince.

Disturbingly, police and security forces responsible for ensuring the ability of journalists to work safely can be the aggressors. Earlier this month, officers with the General Security Unit for the National Palace (USGPN) beat journalist Raynald Petit-Frère while he attempted to cover a public event, and threatened to kill him if he took a picture of their license plate. In the case of the journalist Néhémie Joseph, who was found dead in his car in Mirebalais on October 10, there are allegations that Haitian security forces or public officials were involved or even ordered the attack. Before his murder, Joseph mentioned in social media posts that he had received threats from two politicians, including a sitting senator.

Even when journalists do report credible death threats to relevant authorities, there are few indications that the cases progress past the initial report, or that journalists receive any official measures to ensure their safety. In two separate incidents this summer, unidentified attackers shot at the vehicles of

journalists who had previously reported threats to police. [Lucson Saint-Vil](#), a reporter for *Loop Haiti*, was attacked on August 6, just days after he filed a complaint with judicial police about threatening text messages. Television and print journalist [Kendi Zidor](#), who survived a shooting attempt on July 16, had also filed a police report after receiving threatening messages. As far as we know, police have not followed up with either journalist on their complaints.

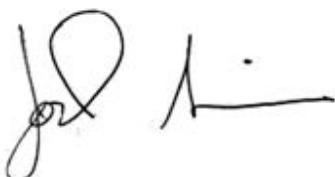
The few investigations that have been opened are characterized by slow progress and an opaque process during which the public receives little information, or the investigation simply tapers off with no official conclusion or prosecution. Consider two examples:

- One week after journalist [Pétion Rospide](#) was killed in Port-au-Prince on June 10, city commissioner Paul Éronce Villard said an investigation led by the Prosecutor's Office and Judicial Police was on a "[good track](#)," and promised to make public the results at the appropriate time. More than four months later, authorities have not provided any updates.
- In an even more egregious case, authorities have still not released any official findings about the disappearance of photojournalist [Vladimir Legagneur](#), who went missing in March 2018 in Port-au-Prince, despite promises from authorities in the following months to conduct a full investigation and make its results public. Police have still not shared the results of forensic testing conducted on remains believed to be Legagneur's, more than a year after they were found.

The consistent and specific nature of some of these attacks suggests that they are not simply collateral damage from violent protests or results of general insecurity, but part of a pattern of intentional, targeted aggression against journalists because of their reporting. In order to put an end to this vicious cycle of violence and impunity and uphold freedom of the press, authorities must send a clear and unambiguous message—to society at large and especially to those under their supervision—that violence against journalists will not be tolerated in Haiti, and that those who harm journalists will face justice.

We urge you to use your authority as Minister of Justice and Public Security to ensure police respond appropriately to reported threats against the press, undertake comprehensive and independent investigations into cases of violence against journalists, and make public the results of these investigations in a timely manner.

Sincerely,



Joel Simon
Executive Director
Committee to Protect Journalists



Christophe Deloire
Secretary-General
Reporters Without Borders