

## **Interfering journalists undermines press freedom**

Journalists have to deal regularly with security- and police officers who obstruct them in their work and thereby in danger the press freedom. According to a research of criminologist Frank Bovenkerk and commissioned by the Dutch Association of Journalists (NAJ/NVJ).

### **Sanctions**

From a survey distributed among journalists, of which more than 450 people responded, shows that 80 percent of respondents had one or more times a collision with a security- and police officers. The complaints range from the expulsion of a photographer, for example by a fire until a threat of sanctions as a reporter publishes a story anyway.

### **Trend**

The question is whether this large number of isolated incidents indicates a bigger underlying problem. According to researcher Frank Bovenkerk it is the case. He suspects that many incidents originate from ignorance. For example, security- and police officers are often unaware of the significance of the so-called police press card. With such a card, a journalist can show that he actually works as a journalist. By showing the police press pass, a journalist should in principle get the authorities cooperating but often it turns out not to be the case.

### **Complaints**

Many respondents do not take further steps if they end up in a conflict. Most fear that filing a complaint will turn and or used against them, if the complaint is later founded legitimate. Most of the complaints that are declared legitimate apart from that solved satisfactorily.

### **Education**

One of the recommendations of this research is to better inform both security- and police officers as well journalists about rights and duties. With a better understanding of each other's interests conflicts can be prevented. In police training, there should be more attention on the importance of freedom of information and the way of how journalists works. In addition, journalists must also learn to understand the work of security- and police officers better.

### **World Press Freedom Day**

The study will be presented on Monday May the 3rd during the Day for Press Freedom, an initiative of the DAJ/NVJ and PressNow.

Tonight in NOVA a report following the investigation.

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