RTBF journalist Esmeralda Labye was reporting from the Cologne carnival, on 4 February 2016, when a man, described by the journalist as a “young man speaking German”, sexually assaulted and groped her while the reporter was live on air. The incident took place in the Alter Markt district of Cologne (Germany). Video footage has emerged showing the moment of the attack. German police is looking for two men, wanted in connection with the attack and for making rude gestures to the camera while Ms Labye was reporting.

The representative organisations of journalists remind employers that it is their responsibility to ensure the safety of journalists when they live cover a public event. RTBF and the journalist received the excuses of the Cologne municipality, which promised to provide additional police protection for such events. Later on a teenager handed himself to the police, which released a statement that the 17-year-old admitted it was him on the images taken of the incident.

13 Sep 2016: The German authorities launched a swift investigation into the incident. A teenager turned himself in to the authorities, admitting it was him in the images taken. On 13 September 2016, the partner organisations of the Platform declared this case to be "resolved”, concluding it was no longer an active threat to media freedom.
Article published on the website of the Daily Mail: "He whispered 'would you sleep with me tonight' and grabbed my breasts': TV reporter sexually assaulted live on air tells how she was groped by three drunk German yobs who simulated sex behind her".

Article published on the website of the RTBF (in French): "Agression d'Esmeralda Labye en direct à Cologne, pourquoi la RTBF ne diffuse pas la vidéo"

STATE REPLIES

25 Feb 2016 | Reply from the German authorities

Letter from the Permanent Representation of Germany sent to the Council of Europe