

19
Apr 2019

▲ Lvl. 1

State replied

France

n° 131/2018

Alert created on: 26 Nov 2018

Repeated Attacks on Journalists by the 'Yellow Vest' Protestors

SOURCE OF THREAT ▶ Non-state

CATEGORY  ▶ Attacks on physical safety and integrity of journalists

PARTNER: EFJ/IFJ, CPJ, RSF

The French journalists unions SNJ, SNJ-CGT and CFDT Journalistes denounce the multiplication of attacks on journalists during the "Yellow Vest" protests in several French cities. Since 17 November 2018, the insults or threats by some "yellow vests" against journalists have become commonplace during demonstrations and on social networks. Several journalists were also victims of physical assaults. TV news outlets had to take special measures to protect their reporters. On Saturday, 24 November, uninhibited violence was unleashed against several television crews who were covering the demonstrations. In Besançon, on 17 November, journalists from the BIP community radio were subjected to racist insults. One of them was hit in the face. Suffering from a broken bone, he filed a complaint. In Montpellier, on 18 November, several television reporters were attacked by dozens of protesters. Protesters spat in the face of a freelance journalist who collaborates with several television channels, including BFM TV. In Toulouse, on 24 November, the BFM TV and CNews teams were called "collaborators", and were also the target of spitting and threats. These journalists escaped an attempted lynching, on the Capitol Square, conducted by a hundred people, without the intervention of police. In Béziers, on 24 November, journalists from the regional public channel France 3 Occitanie were severely assaulted. A group of about 300 'yellow vests' also attacked the office of newspaper Midi Libre. A journalist was beaten and the door handle of the local newspaper agency was broken when protesters attempted to break into the premises. Five journalists from CNEWS and BFMTV lodged complaints on grounds of "aggravated violence", "death threats" and "attempted gang assault" following protests held on 24 and 25 November.

UPDATES

07 Jun 2019: On 5 June 2019, the Rouen Criminal Court sentenced five men aged 18 to 59 to six months in prison on charges of "severe assault" against an officer tasked to protect the LCI journalists at the 12 January 2019 protests. The assailants were also

ordered to pay him €3,000 in compensation for the damage suffered by a broken nose. Due to the lack of evidence, only two men were convicted of the assault of the journalists.

➔ **Article from Le Figaro (in French): "Six mois ferme pour l'agression de journalistes et agents de sécurité à Rouen"**

13 May 2019: On 10 May 2019, the Toulouse Criminal Court found Guillaume H., aged 29, guilty of beating and threatening journalist Jean-Luc Thomas at the 24 November 2018 protest. He was sentenced to five months in prison suspended on charges of "severe assault", €1,600 in damages for the journalist and €1 in damages for CNews. He was also banned from attending demonstrations and forced to undergo treatment for two years of probation.

➔ **Article from Le Parisien (in French): "Agression d'un journaliste durant l'acte 2 des Gilets jaunes: cinq mois de prison avec sursis"**

15 Jan 2019: On 12 January 2019, several journalists were heckled or assaulted while covering "yellow vests" demonstrations in France. On the night of Friday 11 to Saturday 12 January, about thirty "yellow vests" blocked the Valenciennes storage house of the regional daily newspaper "La Voix du Nord", preventing the distribution of 20,000 newspapers on Saturday morning. About fifty "yellow vests", some hooded, blocked the printing center of the regional newspaper "Yonne Républicaine" in Auxerre. They gathered in front of the printing center shortly before midnight, preventing the delivery trucks from leaving. The blockade hindered distribution of some editions of "Le Journal du Centre" and "La République du Centre" regional dailies. Near Angouleme, the regional daily "La Charente libre" could be published only thanks to police protection. About 70 "yellow vests" had gathered in front of the newspaper headquarters. They tried to block the distribution of the daily newspaper, accused of being "a pack of hacks on the government's payroll". On Saturday in Rouen, a security guard who accompanied two journalists from the LCI news channel was beaten while on the ground. His nose got broken. A complaint was filed. In Paris, a team of LCI journalists was also attacked by some demonstrators and a journalist was thrown to the ground before the intervention of other protesters intervened to protect her. In Toulon, two video journalists working for the Agence France Presse (AFP) received threats while filming clashes before eventually taking shelter in a restaurant. In Marseille, a video journalist from public TV channel France 3 and two photographers were insulted and prevented from working. In Toulouse, a journalist from the regional daily "La dépêche du Midi", insulted and threatened with rape by hooded "yellow vests", filed a complaint on Sunday 13 January. Sheltered in her car, she heard protesters shout "We'll get you out and rape you," reported on Twitter Lionel Laparade, one of the newspaper editors in chief. In Pau, a freelance journalist from the local media "C L'Info Pau", Franck Paillanave, was hit while reporting live. "Yellow vests" surrounded, showered him with insults, and then beat him. He said on Sunday that he would also file a complaint.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION



- ➔ **Joint statement co-signed by EFJ: "Non, la presse ne doit pas être un bouc émissaire!"**
- ➔ **CPJ report: "Police, 'yellow vest' protesters both target journalists in France, Belgium"**
- ➔ **Statement by the SNJ-CGT Union (in French): "Stop ! Les agressions de journalistes par des manifestants « gilets jaunes » doivent cesser"**
- ➔ **Press statement by the SNJ Union (in French) : "Gilets jaunes : s'en prendre aux journalistes, c'est tourner le dos à la démocratie"**
- ➔ **Op-ed co-signed by EFJ : "Non, la presse ne doit pas être un bouc émissaire!"**

STATE REPLIES



15 Feb 2019 | Reply from the French authorities (in French)

- ➔ **Letter from the Permanent Representation of France to the Council of Europe**

FOLLOW-UPS



26 Feb 2019 | The Commissioner for Human Rights sends a Memorandum to the French Government

- ➔ **Maintaining order and freedom of assembly in the context of the "yellow vests" movement in France**



28 Nov 2018 | Recent attacks against journalists while covering protests are unacceptable. Journalists must be able to work, and inform the citizens on public demonstrations, safely.

- ➔ **Tweet by Harlem Désir**