

NEWS

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Six years on, same unanswered questions about French journalist's death in CAR



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In the absence of any progress in the investigations in the Central African Republic and France into French photojournalist Camille Lepage's murder in the CAR exactly six years ago today, on 12 May 2014, Reporters Without Borders (RSF) calls on the authorities in both countries to finally do what is necessary to shed light on this case.

What RSF, a registered interested party in France, and the Lepage family are seeking has not changed – answers and justice. We know that Lepage was killed in the western Bouar region when the – mostly Christian – “anti-balaka” militiamen with whom she was travelling came under fire. But the identify of their assailants and the circumstances and motive of the attack – was it criminally motivated, was it a dispute between rival militias? – are still unknown. Only a [thorough field investigation](#) could provide the answers.

“The past year has unfortunately provided no new information because no investigation of any kind has been carried out at the scene of the attack,” said Arnaud Froger, the head of RSF's Africa desk. *“It will undoubtedly be hard to answer all the questions still being asked by this journalist's family but, six years after the events, all necessary resources must urgently be deployed in order to clarify the circumstances and motive of the armed attack that resulted in her death. As soon as permitted by the public health situation linked to the coronavirus epidemic, the priorities must include a field investigation and reenactment of the crime.”*

The Lepage family and RSF want the French judicial authorities to ask their Central African counterparts to agree to a joint investigation at the scene of the crime by French and Central African investigators. Lepage's mother, Maryvonne Lepage, told RSF that she fears that the case will be closed although “many unclear points could still be clarified if the authorities in both countries decided to pool efforts and logistic resources effectively in order to relaunch the investigation with a joint resolve to complete it.”

Journalism has been dangerous in the CAR ever since civil war broke out in 2013. [Three Central African journalists](#)– Elisabeth Blanche Olofio, Désiré Luc Sayenga and René Padou – were also [killed](#) in the course of their work at the height of the fighting in 2014.

Four years later, in July 2018, when armed groups still controlled most of the country, three Russian investigative reporters – Orkhan Dzhemal, Alexander Rastorguyev and Kirill Radchenko – were murdered in obscure circumstances after arriving in the CAR to look into the presence of Russian mercenaries. RSF continues to call for an [international investigation](#) into their deaths because of the utter opaqueness of the local investigation.

The Central African Republic is ranked 132nd out of 180 countries in RSF's [2020 World Press Freedom Index](#).