

## Forgotten case of Camille Lepage, French journalist fatally shot in CAR eight years ago



Camille Lepage au stade Bonga-Bonga à Bangui, en octobre 2013.

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**Eight years after French photojournalist Camille Lepage was killed in the Central African Republic (CAR), Reporters Without Borders (RSF) regrets that the investigations into her still unexplained death ground to a complete halt several years ago, and calls on the French and Central African judicial authorities to revive their efforts to shed light on the case.**

Aged 26, Lepage was fatally shot on 12 May 2014 during an armed attack on the “anti-balaka” (Christian militia) convoy with which she was travelling in the western Bouar region, with the aim of covering the aftermath of a raid on a village.

The fifth investigating judge has just taken the case over in France while, in the CAR, the case is pending further investigation. No significant investigative action has been carried out in recent years with the aim of shedding light on the identity and motives of those who fired on the convoy.

There are witnesses who have still not been questioned, there are leads that have not been explored and no reenactment of the attack has ever been carried out. The case file even went missing for several months in the CAR, [as RSF reported](#) at the time.

*“Difficulties linked to the security and public health situation cannot justify the complete lack of any attempt by the French and Central African judicial authorities in recent years to identify the perpetrators of this deadly ambush and their motive,”* said Arnaud Froger, the head of RSF’s Africa desk. *“The judicial authorities must give themselves the means to move forward and to establish the truth. This is the least that we can expect.”*

Several hypotheses for the attack were suggested, including a criminal motive and the possibility of a reprisal by a rival militia. This second hypothesis was ruled out too quickly, according to Lepage family lawyer Vincent Fillola, who says the French judicial authorities have deployed “neither the resources not determination needed” for the case to progress.

Many journalists have fallen victim to the appalling security situation that has prevailed in the CAR since 2013. Three Central African journalists, [Elisabeth Blanche Olofio](#), Désiré Luc Sayenga and René Padou, were killed in the course of their work at the height of the crisis in 2014. Three Russian investigative reporters, Orkhan Dzhemal, Alexander Rastorguyev and Kirill Radchenko, were murdered in unclear circumstances four years later after arriving in the CAR to look into the presence of Russian mercenaries.

RSF called for an [independent international inquiry](#) into the deaths of the Russian journalists because of the complete lack of transparency surrounding the investigations. Recent media articles have suggested that last February’s death of [Jean Sinclair Maka Gbossokotto](#), the editor of the local fact-checking website *Anti Intox RCA*, was also suspicious.