



A story about a **hero of press freedom**

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DONATE

This is the story of Tshivis Tshivuadi, a courageous journalist, who has risked his life to defend press freedom in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Free Press Unlimited has played a crucial role in protecting this defender of press freedom to continue his vital work in a country that is ranked 154th out of 180 in the 2017 World Press Freedom Index.

“In defending others we defend ourselves” - Tshivis Tshivuadi

Freedom of information is repeatedly violated in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Journalists have to work in difficult and dangerous situations: threats, physical violence and arrest are common. In some cases, they even pay with their lives. At least 11 journalists have been murdered between 2005 and 2015 without the perpetrators being brought to justice, according to Reporters without Borders.

Dangers and threats for journalists

Tshivis Tshivuadi is a Congolese journalist. He founded ‘Journaliste en Danger’ (JED), an independent organisation for the defence and promotion of press freedom in DRC, 20 years ago. As the General Secretary, he has a global coordinating role of the activities of JED. One of JED’s main activities is to monitor and publish a yearly report on the state of press freedom in DRC. This report contains a list of dangers and threats journalists are facing. The list gives JED and other stakeholders insight in whether journalists in the DRC are becoming safer or less safe.

Since 2016, the DRC has been in a pre-election period with several outbursts of violence between the opposition and the government of President Joseph Kabila. There has been a lot of tension and journalists have been amongst the victims. In November 2017, JED's report was published and Tshivuadi accused the authorities of being responsible for attacks and threats against journalists. Moreover, the report listed several names of high-level government officials as “enemies of the press”. Free Press Unlimited has been an instrumental funding partner in developing and publishing the report as JED has been able to show that there has been an increase in the attacks and violence against journalists in the DRC. Besides financial support, Free Press Unlimited supports JED in approving their communication strategies. The support of international organisations and

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foreign embassies also gives a lot of moral support to courageous press freedom defenders like JED.

Armed men with rifles

On the night of 30 December 2017, six men brandishing rifles arrived at Tshivuadi's home. They assaulted the guards and surrounded his neighbourhood. Luckily, Tshivuadi was not at home, because he was forced to seek some safer place to continue his work. "In the last report we've listed around 20 responsible people. There have been a lot of reactions, and along with them, threats against us. I had to stay in the background due to these treats. This is proof that our report has a huge impact.", says Tshivuadi. Free Press Unlimited believes that it is really important that journalists continue doing their vital work when faced with local obstruction.

Control and censorship of the media, attacks and assassinations of reporters: Congolese citizens are starting to find these types of violence normal. In order to improve this situation, there must be an improvement of the general condition of the country. All Congolese must make an effort and help to make DRC a democratic place. As Tshivuadi states: "it is our responsibility to participate in the reconstruction of the country and the reinforcement of the democracy to be able to leave our children a normal country".

Currently, there have not been any political or legal measures in order to improve the freedom of the press in DRC. However, heroes as Tshivuadi will continue fighting peacefully for a more democratic, free and open society in DRC.

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