



Mobile journalism of life-and-death importance in the DRC

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Since 2016, the DRC has been in a pre-election period with several violent scenes between the opposition and the government of Joseph Kabila. The role of reporters during this period has proved to be essential and challenging. There has been a lot of tension and journalists have been amongst the victims. In 2017, a total of 121 attacks against journalists have been reported. Journalists covering news during and about the pre-election period have to be very careful on how they report, because the threats are not only coming from the authorities, but from the opposition as well.

Willy Akonda and Christine Tshibuyi are two Congolese journalists working for [Actualité.cd](#), Congolese partner of Free Press Unlimited. In February 2018 the reporters of Actualité.cd were trained in Mobile Journalism. They learned how to use their own smartphone to collect and edit information, and send it to the editor-in-chief for broadcasting. Actualité.cd was founded in 2016 as an online media company specialised in political, security and economic information in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Actualité.cd is the largest medium providing online news in the DRC. Free Press Unlimited will continue supporting Actualité.cd as we believe that objective and fact-based information can be of life-and-death importance.

Willy and Christine are driven and fearless journalists. They have been providing quality and verifiable information in the DRC for many years. Their main contribution is to diffuse real and verifiable information without judgment. Because most of the information that is published in the DRC is based on opinions. Concrete, impartial information is rare.

The DRC is a conflict country with a lot of challenges. Protests, for example, are mostly unauthorised. Christine and Willy use mobile phones to practise journalism, because that way the police can not distinguish journalists from citizens. Once the police identifies journalists, they take them away to be arrested. Authorities constantly intimidate journalists by stating that they do not have the right to cover a protest, as these are unauthorised.

Journalist safety

Christine and Willy state that not much has changed in the DRC in relation to the safety of journalists. They have noticed that there is a huge gap between the government leaders and the

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local authorities. For example, the digital domain is taking over the world. People access information on the web, on their mobiles and computers. Christine and Willy collect information with their phone. When they gather information on their phones, the local authorities do not know that reporters use their phones as a tool to collect information and this becomes a problem. The government leaders are aware but the local authorities are not.

Christine mostly covers protests, and this has been particularly important during the pre-election period. Unfortunately, local authorities do not recognise the journalistic work and journalists do not have the freedom to exercise their profession in a safe way. Moreover, as a professional woman she has been treated as the weak sex. With frustration she mentions that throughout her career she has received comments from different people saying that she is a young woman and she should be looking for another job. Christine, together with 6 other journalists have been questioned, intimidated and confined when they covered unauthorised public manifestations of people claiming the respect of the December 2016 agreement.

For most people in the DRC, access to concrete, impartial information is difficult. Christine and Willy will continue providing reliable information in this very turbulent period. Because they deeply believe that if Congolese people are able to judge their situation, they can make the right decisions for their future.

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CONTACT DETAILS

Weesperstraat 3

1018 DN Amsterdam

The Netherlands

T: +31 20 8000400

E: info[at]freepressunlimited.org

IBAN: NL92 INGB 000 000 7676



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