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Americas - Trinidad and Tobago

Home and office searched

Police disregard confidentiality rules in raids to find journalist's sources

13 February 2012

Nine officers of the police Anti-Corruption Investigation Bureau raided the offices of the newspaper *Newsday* on 9 February.

Their target was the journalist **Andre Bagoo** who wrote an article about a dispute between Ken Gordon, the chairman of the Integrity Commission, and his deputy Gladys Gafoor. The Commission is an independent body that oversees the ethical practices of those in public life and occupying a public position.

Bagoo had refused to reveal his sources as ordered in a letter sent by the police on 20 January. Documents, three computers and two cell phones belonging to the journalist were seized in the raid and his home was also searched.

Two search warrants were issued by the commissioner of police, Dwayne Gibbs, without judicial approval as required by law.

"These raids are a clear violation of the confidentiality of sources, a fundamental principle of journalism," Reporters Without Borders said.

"This precedent causes considerable harm to the profession and could in future discourage journalists from seeking out information that is sensitive or in the public interest. The arrest warrants should not have been executed without judicial approval. Besides being detrimental to freedom of information, such action is illegal. The confiscated documents and equipment must immediately be returned to Andre Bagoo and *Newsday*."

Bagoo exposed internal conflicts among the Integrity Commission's board of governors. Gafoor, the deputy chairman, was reported to have been asked to withdraw comments she made about a land deal involving the former chief magistrate Sherman McNichols and the former attorney general, John Jeremie.

The Commission asked the police to investigate how information considered to be confidential was leaked.

The incident is not the first of its kind. On 29 December 2011, the offices of the cable television channel TV6 were searched for all documents relating to the screening on 25 and 26 October of footage of the rape of a 13-year-old schoolgirl in the programme "Crime Watch".

While condemning the broadcast of such shocking images of no news interest, Reporters Without Borders believes this, too, to be an infringement of professional secrecy.

Scarred by a case of government [spying on journalists](#), Trinidad and Tobago fell 20 places to 50th in the latest [world press freedom index](#) published by Reporters Without Borders.
