

# Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/papouasie-n-guinee-grenade-wielding-police-officer-09-03-2012,42044.html>

---

Asia - Papua New Guinea

Death threat

## Grenade-wielding police officer threatens newspaper reporter

9 March 2012

---

Reporters Without Borders condemns the death threats that **Patrick Talu**, a reporter for the [Post-Courier](#) newspaper, received from police officers brandishing guns and a hand-grenade at a meeting yesterday in the capital, Port Moresby, between officials and landowners opposed to a controversial gas pipeline project.

"Urgent steps must be taken to stop this kind of abuse of authority and to ensure that the news media are not in any danger while doing their job of informing the public," Reporters Without Borders said.

"The government must not only condemn this threatening behaviour by the police and take measures to ensure that those responsible are punished, it must also refrain from issuing statements that could fuel the climate of suspicion and lead to more threats against journalists and to self-censorship."

Talu was threatened when he went to the capital's Unagi Oval district for the meeting about the proposed pipeline between a group of angry landowners and the two officials who head the Hela Transitional Authority, chairman James Marape and CEO William Bando. The pipeline is to be built in Hela province, Southern Highlands Province and Western Highlands Province.

According to a report in the *Post-Courier*, Talu found himself surrounded by about 15 armed police who were part of a special unit that had been flown from Mount Hagen, the capital of Western Highlands Province, by police commissioner Tom Kulunga to keep order at the meeting.

During the meeting, the police chased some of the landowners and opened fire on them. When Talu started to film this, the police seized his camera, demanded his press ID, pushed him and told him to leave. One police officer grabbed his mobile phone. Another, brandishing an M-16 rifle and grenade, said: "Go away, I will blow you up."

Referring to a front-page photo in the previous day's *Post-Courier* showing gun-wielding policemen chasing landowners, one of the policemen pointed his rifle at Talu and said: "You newspapers are painting a bad picture of us policemen."

After the incident, Talu called on police commissioner Kulunga to disarm the rogue policemen and to dismiss those who threatened him. He also said he was worried by the government's tolerance of police abuses.

The incident came a week after the prime minister's chief of staff, Ben Micah, published a notice in all the newspapers in which he warned against "subversive" comments online that endanger "the

overall security of the nation” and urged “patriots” to be vigilant. In a statement yesterday, Prime Minister Peter O’Neill distanced himself from his assistant’s warning, which was condemned by the New Zealand-based [Pacific Media Centre](#).

---