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Asia - Indonesia

Unwanted witnesses

Air force tries to impose news blackout on fighter jet crash

17 October 2012

Reporters Without Borders deplores the beating that six journalists received from air force personnel when they tried to cover the crash of an air force fighter jet yesterday in Riau province in the eastern part of Sumatra Island.

Armed Forces chief Admiral Agus Suhartono defended the use of violence on "public safety" grounds. Onlookers at the crash site in the village of Kampar, near the provincial capital of Pekanbaru, had to be kept at a distance because the fighter may have had bombs that "could have exploded at any moment," he said.

"We condemn this violation of freedom of information," Reporters Without Borders said. "Nothing can justify the use of such violence against journalists acting in the public interest. These reporters were trying to inform the public about a tragic incident, which the air force, was clearly trying to cover up".

"An investigation must be carried out. Those responsible for such violence must be arrested and tried so this does not go unpunished. The cameras and video cameras that were taken from the reporters must be returned without delay."

The six journalists who were roughed up were identified as **Rian Febrianto Budi Anggoro** of the *Antara News Agency*, **Didiek Herwanto** of the *Riau Post*, **Fakhri Rubianto** of *Riau TV*, **Ari** of *TV One*, **Irwansyah** of *Riau TV* and **Andhika** of *Vocal Magazine*.

Anggoro was attacked and beaten by about 10 air force officers as he tried to take photos of the crashed fighter from a distance of 50 metres. Herwanto was hit several times, sustaining a serious ear injury and other injuries.

Journalists' organizations staged [simultaneous protests](#) in some ten cities throughout Indonesia today in solidarity with their colleagues.

Indonesia is ranked 146th out of 179 countries in [the 2011-2012 Reporters Without Borders press freedom index](#).

(Photo: Antara/HO/FA)

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