

Reporters Without Borders

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Asia - Indonesia

Detained

Two French journalists held for past five days in Indonesian province of Papua

11 August 2014

Police say they are suspected of promoting instability in the region

Reporters Without Borders deplores the detention of French journalists **Thomas Dandois** and **Valentine Bourrat** in the Indonesian province of Papua (on the island of New Guinea) since 6 August and calls on the local authorities to release them at once.

Employed by Memento, a production company, they were doing a report on the Indonesian half of New Guinea for the Franco-German TV channel *Arte*. Officially, they are being held for violating immigration regulations but the police say they are suspected of promoting instability. Dandois' fixer and interpreter was also arrested.

Reporters Without Borders regards their continuing detention as illegal.

They were covering the living conditions of the local population and separatist demands. According to the information obtained by Reporters Without Borders, they were arrested in the town of Wamena and were interrogated by the police for 36 hours.

After taking their passports, the police then allowed them to spend the night in a hotel in Wamena. But, on 8 August, the police transferred them to the provincial capital of Jayapura, where they have been held ever since.

"That Dandois and Bourrat were doing a report on Papua is beyond all question," said Reporters Without Borders secretary-general Christophe Deloire. *"These two reporters are known for their integrity and honesty. Holding them for such a long time must be regarded as a violation of media freedom. We urge the authorities to release them without delay."*

The Indonesia authorities have drastically restricted access by foreign journalists to the western half of New Guinea since 1969 because of the existence of significant state violence against civilians, ongoing civil resistance, and the existence of a separatist movement which they have tried to suppress using a great deal of force.

President-elect Jokowi Widodo, who is to be sworn in on 20 October, promised during his campaign to open up Western New Guinea to journalists. The July presidential election has been portrayed as the outcome of the country's democratization.

An experienced reporter who has worked in Somalia, Burma, Kosovo, Darfur and the Gaza Strip, Dandois was arrested in Niger in 2007 while making a documentary about the Tuareg rebellion. The Festival International du Grand Reportage d'Actualité (FIGRA) awarded him the prize for the best report of less than 40 minutes in 2012.

A freelance photographer and camera operator, Bourrat is the daughter of the well-known *TF1* reporter **Patrick Bourrat**, who was killed while reporting in Kuwait in 2002.

Indonesia is ranked 132nd out of 180 countries in the 2014 Reporters Without Borders [press freedom index](#).

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