

Reporters Without Borders

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Africa - Côte d'Ivoire

Côte d'Ivoire

Disinterred body was not missing journalist's

13 January 2012

Reporters Without Borders reaffirms its support for the family of missing Franco-Canadian journalist **Guy-André Kieffer**, which learned yesterday that DNA tests have established that the remains of a body found last week in Côte d'Ivoire were not his after all. Kieffer has been missing since his abduction in Côte d'Ivoire's commercial capital, Abidjan, in April 2004.

"None of us, none of Kieffer's relatives, friends and colleagues, will give up until the truth about his disappearance has been established and those responsible have been brought to justice," Reporters Without Borders said. "Our organization, which is registered as an interested party in this case, urges the Ivorian and French authorities to continue working together and asks the French investigating judge, Patrick Ramaël, to keep going until justice is done."

Referring to yesterday's DNA results, Kieffer's wife, Osange Silou-Kieffer, said: "This news is a relief as it encourages me to think that Guy-André could still be alive. The fight continues but the problem is unchanged. We still do not know what happened to my husband. But I would like to salute the constant efforts by Judge Ramaël, who has tirelessly examined all the clues that have emerged in the investigation and has pursued ever new lead to the end."

Kieffer's brother, Bernard Kieffer, said: "We are on more of a state of alert than ever as a result of this announcement and we fully support this judge, who has been making every effort since 2004 to pursue this investigation, often in very difficult circumstances. Bit by bit, we are making progress and we are getting closer to the truth."

Background

A specialist in covering commodities, trade and finance, Kieffer was kidnapped by gunmen from an Abidjan supermarket parking lot on 16 April 2004 after going there to meet Michel Légré, the brother-in-law of then President Laurent Gbagbo's wife, Simone Gbagbo. At the time of his disappearance, he had been looking into shady practices in the production and export of cocoa, of which Côte d'Ivoire is the world's leading producer.

Twelve days after his disappearance, his family filed a complaint in France accusing unidentified persons of kidnapping him. Reporters Without Borders registered as civil party in this case a few days later. Judge Ramaël took charge of the case but his attempts to identify those responsible were hampered by the fraught relations between France and the Gbagbo government, the difficulty of investigating in Côte d'Ivoire, and the pact of silence observed by those suspected of involvement, who were all close to President Gbagbo.

Ramaël has visited Côte d'Ivoire three times since Gbagbo's replacement as president by Alassane Ouattara last April. The people he questioned during a visit in November included Patrice Baï, who was Gbagbo's chief bodyguard, and Anselme Séka Yapo, who headed the unit that protected former first lady Simone Gbagbo.

It was Ramaël who, acting on a tip-off, ordered the search that led to the discovery of a body

on 6 January in the west of the country. The informant had said that he was present when the body was buried in 2004 and that he thought he recognized it as Kieffer's.

Eight years of international campaigning

During the eight years since his abduction, Kieffer's relatives and colleagues have never ceased to draw attention to his disappearance and the lack of progress in the investigation. On the first anniversary of his abduction, a vigil of singing and poetry-reading was organized at Chapelle des Lombards in Paris.

Reporters Without Borders, Osange Silou-Kieffer, the "Truth for Guy-André Kieffer" Association and the "Guy-André Kieffer Breton Support Committee" also dumped liquid cocoa and fake dollars outside the Côte d'Ivoire embassy in Paris on 15 April 2005. A "What did Guy-André Kieffer know?" protest was held at Côte d'Ivoire's stand at the Chocolate Exhibition in Paris on 28 October 2006. "Where is Guy André Kieffer?" posters were put up in many parts of the Paris, including outside the Côte d'Ivoire embassy, on 16 April 2007.

The Lyon Press Club has meanwhile staged many events and demonstrations since 2004 in support of initiatives by Kieffer's Lyon-based family (including press and poster campaigns, concerts and conferences).

On the fifth anniversary, in 2009, the Kieffer family, support groups and Reporters Without Borders staged a demonstration on Bastille Square in Paris and an evening of music and poetry at the Cabaret Sauvage.

The following year, in April 2010, a news conference was held at Reporters Without Borders headquarters in Paris with the Kieffer family and representatives of support groups in attendance. A news conference was also held in Abidjan by the Guy-André Kieffer Ivorian Collective with the support of the National Union of Journalists of Côte d'Ivoire (UNJCI). Large posters of Kieffer (4 x 3 metres) were also posted for the first time on the streets and avenues of Abidjan for the sixth anniversary, while an evening of songs and poems were held at the Dapper Museum in Paris.

Finally, in 2011, a march was organized from Place de la Bourse to Jardin des Tuileries in Paris.

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