

Reporters Without Borders

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Africa - Congo

Attack

Reporters Without Borders shocked by the violent attack on journalist Elie Smith and his sister

12 September 2014

An armed robbery at TV journalist Elie Smith's Brazzaville home in the early hours of 10 September, during which Smith's sister was raped, is suspected by Smith's media colleagues of being a government-orchestrated act of reprisal.

A Cameroonian journalist based in Republic of Congo (Congo-Brazzaville), **Elie Smith** hosts a leading interview programme on *MNTV*.

Shortly after returning home at 1 a.m. on 10 September, four heavily-armed men in civilian dress and police-style boots burst into his home, threatened to kill him, roughed him up, took his wedding ring, and then set about gathering up objects of value.

After ransacking the entire house, they took Smith's sister into a bedroom and raped her, and then finally left without doing Smith any further harm. His sister is still hospitalized.

Fellow journalists think the robbery was a sham and that the operation was a reprisal by pro-government elements within the police for Smith's outspoken comments during his programme, "La Grande Interview," which are thought to have upset the government. He has allegedly been under surveillance for some weeks.

Smith also posted online photos showing activists who were injured by plainclothesmen during a meeting of the Opposition Party Collective on 7 September. Had he gone too far in the eyes of the authorities? According to Internet users, the police spokesman was very angry about the photos.

"*The violence of the attack on Smith and his sister is extremely shocking,*" Reporters Without Borders assistant research director Virginie Dangles said. "*We urge the authorities to quickly arrest the assailants and find out who gave them their orders.*"

News of the attack on Smith and his sister quickly circulated. After [breaking the story on her blog](#) on 10 September, journalist and blogger Sadio Kante was summoned to police headquarters yesterday. She was interrogated for several hours.

Republic of Congo is ranked 82nd out of 180 countries in the [2014 Reporters Without Borders press freedom index](#).

(*photo*: Elie Smith)
