

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/rca-community-radio-stations-ransacked-10-01-2013,43892.html>

Africa - CAR

Injured but alive

Journalist recounts ordeal after being reported dead for a month

27 February 2013

Reporters Without Borders is relieved to learn that *Radio Be Oko* journalist **Elisabeth Blanche Olofio** was not, as previously reported, killed when members of the Séléka rebel coalition occupied the central town of Bambari in early January.

The Community Radio Association (ARC) reported her death in a 7 January press release and, after obtaining confirmation from an independent source, Reporters Without Borders also reported it three days later.

The ARC issued a correction on 24 February. It turns out that this young woman is alive and is now in the capital Bangui. She still bears physical and psychological scars from her ordeal, which she has recounted to the ARC.



**Listen to her
story (in french)**

According to the ARC, Séléka rebels ransacked and destroyed her home on 4 January, because they thought she had "a sharp tongue." She fled the area during the destruction but on her return, she and her neighbours confronted the rebels.

In reprisal, about 30 rebels surrounded her house and beat everyone present, injuring many of them. After being hit on the head and losing consciousness, Olofio was taken to a village in the countryside to receive traditional care for her injuries.

Following the reports of her death on 7 January, relatives and NGO representatives went to the village to attend her burial. After discovering she was still alive but injured, they persuaded her to seek treatment in a hospital in the city.



**Elisabeth Blanche Olofio, 24
february 2013**

10.01.2013 - Community radio stations ransacked, woman journalist killed

Reporters Without Borders is deeply disturbed by acts of violence against news media and journalists in connection with a month-old armed uprising in the Central African Republic against President François Bozizé's government.

Community radio stations, a major source of news for much of the population, have been particularly affected.

Reporters Without Borders has learned that equipment was damaged or removed at several radio stations, including *Radio Be Oko* in the central town of Bambari and *Radio Kaga* in the central town of Kaga Bandoro.

Radio Be Oko journalist **Elisabeth Blanche Olofio** was killed when rebels attacked her station. The fate of her colleagues is not known.

According to information obtained by Reporters Without Borders, other journalists have been subjected to physical violence or are being threatened.

"Several community radio stations are no longer able to operate as result of rebel hostility or looting by local residents taking advantage of the chaos," Reporters Without Borders said. "Although politically neutral many stations have had to stop broadcasting because they no longer have the required equipment or out of concern for the safety of their personnel.

"Silencing journalists at times of unrest endangers the population by depriving them of crucial information. It is essential for a solution to the crisis that the acts of violence against the media should stop."

Radio Magbadja, a radio station recently installed in Alindao by the staff of *Radio France Internationale*, was also ransacked by members of the Seleka rebel coalition, who took all of its equipment.

The Central African Community Radio Association (ARC) has named eight radio stations as being particularly hit by the violence:

- *Radio Yata* in Birao
- *Radio Barangbaké* in Bria
- *Radio Linga FM* in Bambari
- *Radio Be Oko* in Bambari
- *Radio Kaga* in Kaga Bandoro
- *Radio ICDI* in Boali
- *Radio Magbadja* in Alindao

- *Radio Mbari* in Bangassou.

The Central African Republic is ranked 62nd out of 179 countries in the Reporters Without Borders press freedom index. Although unevenly distributed across the country, radio stations are one of the main sources of news because of the low level of literacy.

[More information about the media and freedom of information in the Central African Republic.](#)

Photo : Soliders from the Seleka rebel coalition (Michel Sardou / FOMAC / AFP)

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