

Togolese journalist killed in Angola attack

NEW YORK: The Committee to Protect Journalists yesterday, 11 January 2010, called on Angolan authorities to ensure the safety of sports journalists covering the African Nations Cup following the death of a Togolese sports journalist on Friday, 8 January 2010.

Stanislas Ocloo was gunned down in the attack on Togo's national soccer team's bus in the northwestern Angolan enclave of Cabinda. Also killed was assistant coach Hamelet Abulo, according to Angola's official ANGOP news agency. As many as three people were killed and nine injured in the strike, CNN reported.

Ocloo, 35, a contributor to sports programs on national broadcaster Télévision Togolaise (TVT) and the communications chief of the Togolese soccer association, died on Saturday morning local time, hours before the kick-off of the African Nations Cup he was going to cover, according to news reports. TVT presenter Blaise Amedodji, who appeared with Ocloo on a weekly sports program called "Club of Saturday" since 2007, told CPJ the journalist had planned to carry out interviews with African soccer stars for the station.

Angolan authorities announced yesterday the arrests of two suspects in connection with the attack, which was claimed by the separatist Front for the Liberation of the Enclave of Cabinda, according to news reports. There has been a low-level insurgency for regional independence for decades.

"We mourn the loss of Stanislas Ocloo, a sports journalist who fell victim to the political violence in Cabinda," said CPJ Africa program coordinator Tom Rhodes. "Angolan authorities must thoroughly investigate the circumstances and bring to justice the perpetrators of this heinous incident and ensure the safety of journalists covering the tournament."

According to local journalists, hooded gunmen opened fire on the team bus some 15 minutes after it crossed into Cabinda from neighbouring Republic of Congo. Togo pulled out of the tournament and a national three-day mourning period began yesterday. The Union of Independent Journalists of Togo called the incident "savage aggression" and called on Angolan authorities to assume responsibility for the security lapse.

Some of Ocloo's colleagues who spoke to CPJ from the capital of Togo, Lomé, called his death a great loss. "He was very, very intelligent, a man of struggle and commitment," said Amedodji. Another local journalist, Dimas Dzikodo, who shared media duties with Ocloo at the soccer federation, told CPJ he remembers the journalist as "a very dedicated young man" who mastered analyses of national, African, and international sports.

Ocloo began his journalism career in 1995 as a consultant with a youth program on private station Tropic FM, then reported with Avenir FM before joining Togo's first sports station, Sport FM, in 2001, according to Amedodji. Ocloo had become engaged last month, according to local journalists.

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