

UN condemns killing of French journalist in CAR

NEW YORK, US / BANGUI, CAR: The UN Security Council has condemned the killing of a French journalist in the Central African Republic, stating those responsible "shall be held accountable". (Video)

The body of 26-year-old Camille Lepage, described by her mother in French media as "an exceptional girl" who wanted to be "a witness to people that are not talked about and who are in danger", was found Tuesday by a patrol of French peacekeeping troops.

They were checking a vehicle driven by "anti-balaka" militiamen in the region of Bouar, in the west of Central Africa, a French presidency statement said.

French President Francois Hollande, speaking earlier during a visit to the Georgian capital of Tbilisi, said Lepage "was taking photographs, doing her job and no doubt fell into an ambush".

A French military source said Lepage was with the militia as part of her efforts to report on the conflict when they were attacked on Monday.

"She was killed by gunfire and her body was recovered by the anti-balaka along with those of their comrades," said the source, who requested anonymity, adding that an inquiry was under way into the exact circumstances of her death.



Camille Lepage: "An exceptional girl" who wanted to be "a witness to people that are not talked about and who are in danger". (Image extracted from Vimeo video)

Lepage worked as a photographer for Hans Lucas, a studio based in Paris, according to its website. Her death comes six months after two French journalists for RFI radio were killed in Mali.

Deeply impoverished Central Africa has been gripped by crisis since the mainly Muslim Seleka rebels seized power in a March 2013 coup, but then were replaced with an interim government in January.

Splinter groups of Seleka rebels, however, embarked on a campaign of killing, raping and looting, prompting members of the Christian majority to form vigilante "anti-balaka" groups.

The two groups have unleashed a wave of tit-for-tat killings that has left thousands dead and close to a million displaced.

Lepage's mother said her daughter left for Central Africa in September, adding: "She wasn't afraid."

[Camille Lepage \(en\)](#) from [Eyes in Progress](#) on [Vimeo](#).

The UN Security Council members sent their condolences to the victim's family and underlined that, according to international humanitarian law, journalists in a conflict zone should be treated as civilians.

There will be consequences

The Security Council statement called on the Central African Republic government to investigate the incident, and stressed that "those responsible for the killing shall be held accountable".

US President Barack Obama on Tuesday imposed sanctions against the former Central African Republic leaders Francois Bozize and Michel Djotodia and three other officials, the White House said.

The move comes on the heels of UN sanctions announced Friday by the Security Council against three of the same five men, including Bozize.

The sanctions aim to send "a powerful message that impunity will not be tolerated, and that those who threaten the stability of the CAR will face consequences," the White House said in a statement.

Obama has also put in place a framework for potentially wider sanctions, calling the situation in the Central African Republic a "threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States" in a letter to Congress about the measures.

Hollande spoke of the violence gripping the former French colony, noting that "at the moment when we learned of the death of this young woman, we also got information of another massacre which took place in Central Africa".

At least 13 people were burned alive at the weekend in Central Africa when they were rounded up by armed men and barricaded inside a home that was set alight, a police source said Tuesday.

Hollande said that French troops along with European and African forces must continue their work to help restore peace and stability in the conflict-torn country.

Source: *AFP*, via I-Net Bridge

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