



PRESS RELEASE

France – 17 NGOs denounce threats of prosecution against French journalists investigating French weapons in Yemen

Paris, 13 May 2019 – 17 humanitarian and human rights NGOs today denounced threats to press freedom after three French journalists were summoned by the French intelligence services for investigating the presence of French weapons in the conflict in Yemen.

Geoffrey Livolsi and Mathias Destal of the French investigative media *Disclose*, as well as Benoît Collombat of Radio France's investigation unit, are being heard on Tuesday and Wednesday by the General Directorate for Internal Security (DGSI) as part of the preliminary investigation for "compromising national defence secrecy" opened by the Paris prosecutor's office after the Ministry of the Armed Forces lodged a complaint.

On 15 April, *Disclose* and its partners published documents classified as "confidential defence" by the Directorate of Military Intelligence (DRM) confirming what our NGOs have been highlighting for months (in particular [ACAT](#), [Amnesty International](#), [FIDH](#) and [the Observatoire des Armements](#)): French military equipment purchased by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates is involved in the war in Yemen, with a major risk of its use in illegal attacks against civilian populations.

The documents revealed by *Disclose* also show that the French authorities have no certainty about the use of French weapons, contrary to the [assurances still given in recent days](#) by the President, the Minister of the Armed Forces and the Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs, who were recipients of the DRM documents.

Since April 15, *Disclose* has continued to investigate French weapons in Yemen by revealing the arrival in Le Havre of a Saudi cargo ship scheduled to load French military equipment. The information, which the Minister of the Armed Forces, Florence Parly, was forced to confirm, prompted a strong mobilization of our NGOs and parliamentarians, and the ship finally left France last Friday without the planned cargo.

The undersigned NGOs consider the information unveiled by *Disclose* and its partners to be of essential public interest. It confirms the major risk of French-made weapons being used in war crimes in Yemen, in breach of France's international obligations under the Arms Trade Treaty, of which France is also [one of the main defenders](#), and the European Union's Common Position.

In this context, the threat of prosecution against the three journalists, reaffirmed last week by Florence Parly, constitutes an unacceptable threat to press freedom and the protection of journalistic sources.

Benoît Collombat, Mathias Destal, and Geoffrey Livolsi are threatened just for having done their job, in a responsible manner, without revealing ongoing French military operations or putting any French personnel in danger.

The undersigned NGOs express our full solidarity with the three journalists summoned this week. They call on the Minister of the Interior, the Minister of the Armed Forces and the Minister of Europe and Foreign Affairs to stop intimidation against the press and to guarantee the confidentiality of sources.

Signatories :

1. ACAT
2. Action Contre la Faim
3. AIDL, Alliance internationale pour la défense des droits et des libertés
4. Amnesty International
5. CARE France
6. Collectif Solidarité Yémen / Yemen Solidarity Coalition
7. Fédération Internationale des Ligues Droits de l'Homme (FIDH)
8. Handicap International (HI)
9. Human Right Watch
10. Ligue des Droits de l'Homme (LDH)
11. Médecins du monde
12. Observatoire des Armements
13. Oxfam France
14. Salam for Yemen
15. STAND France, Mouvement étudiant de lutte contre les génocides et crimes de masse
16. Sherpa
17. SumOfUs

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- FIDH : Samuel Hanryon, 06 72 28 42 94, shanryon@fidh.org

Resources :

- [Petition launched by Yemeni journalist Afrah Nasser](#): "Stop threats against journalists investigating French weapons in Yemen"
- [Yemen: Call by 10 NGOs after the Disclose investigation on Yemen](#) (15 April)