

PRESS RELEASE

Train hijacking 'De Punt': surviving relatives and a survivor hold the State liable

Amsterdam, 5 November 2014 - Today, lawyers Liesbeth Zegveld and Brechtje Vossenbergh have held the Dutch State liable on behalf of the surviving relatives of five hijackers who were shot dead when the hijacking of a train near the town De Punt (Drenthe) was ended by force, as well as on behalf of one survivor of that assault.

The reason for the declaration of liability are documents drawn up shortly after the hijacking that became available in 2013, that investigative journalist Jan Beckers managed to obtain. Those documents show that the government used an excessive amount of force during the storming of the train, and that there was conduct in violation of the ordinarily applicable rules of engagement. The documents include autopsy reports and reports of the judicial forensic investigation. Aside from clarity about the scope of the force that was deployed, the documents also show that hijackers were executed, hijackers were gunned down in their sleep and that gunfire was aimed at the bodies of hijackers who were already dead. Moreover, the marines that entered the train used *Hollow Point 5* bullets, a type of ammunition that is prohibited by the laws of war.

In the aftermath of the hijacking of the train, the State covered up essential information concerning the events that took place in the train, and false information was provided about the scope of the force that was deployed. That was done not only towards the surviving relatives of the hijackers who were killed, but also towards the Second Chamber of Parliament and surviving relatives of one of the hostages that was killed. At the time, his widow was told that her husband had been fatally hit by 'one Moluccan bullet', whilst a report from 1978 that was kept under wraps showed that he was in fact hit by six bullets fired from one or more of the weapons used by the marines in the train.

Background

In the morning of 23 May 1977, nine young Moluccans hijacked an intercity train near the town De Punt (Drenthe). The train hijacking was ended by force on 13 June 1977, killing six of the nine hijackers and two hostages, and (gravely) wounding others. In his report to parliament, the then Minister of Justice Van Agt stated that 'controlled force' had been used; the government closed the file on 23 June 1977. The documents that have now become available contradict that conclusion. In response to questions in parliament late 2013, the Minister of Security and Justice Opstelten ordered an archival investigation into 'De Punt'.

Contact person: prof. Liesbeth Zegveld – Prakken d'Oliveira *Human Rights Lawyers*

Keizersgracht 560-562, 1017 EM Amsterdam Tel.: +31 (0)20-344 62 00, email: LZegveld@prakkendoliveira.nl