

Press statement [Report Commission Cammaert](#)

'No indications of support for terrorists'

The fact that an expensive committee had to be set up to investigate whether the Netherlands actually supported jihadists in Syria would not have been necessary if politicians had taken note of our vindication, supported by evidence and arguments, against this bizarre claim. Because that was the claim that news program [Nieuwsuur](#) and daily newspaper [Trouw](#) made in September 2018: the Netherlands would have supported jihadists in Syria. And that while the Netherlands supported all kinds of opposition groups in Syria, against Islamic State in particular. The Netherlands had furthermore also provided this support in a coalition of largely Western countries in the context of the so-called NLA program (Non-Lethal Assistance). If the Netherlands would have provided such support, then other countries could have done the same, and why did other countries never hold the Netherlands to account? Well, for the simple reason that the Netherlands never supported jihadists in Syria.

We have indicated time and again in the public debate that the news reports were incorrect, we have even set up a [website](#) for it in which we extensively discuss the arguments that *Nieuwsuur* and *Trouw* put forward for their bold claim, deconstructing and debunking them. Now the Cammaert Committee published its report on Friday 9 December 2022 and the committee came to conclusions that we drew much earlier: The Netherlands has never supported jihadists in the fight in Syria. It is now definitively established that *Nieuwsuur* and *Trouw* were wrong in this.

The interaction between us and journalists from *Nieuwsuur* and *Trouw* took the form of various opinion pieces in major Dutch newspapers and on Twitter. Our [website](#) provides an overview.

But to our great shock and surprise, the editors-in-chief of *Nieuwsuur* and *Trouw* went a step further and filed complaints against both of us with our (former) employers: Tilburg University (Jan Jaap de Ruiter) and Institute Clingendael (Rena Netjes). A file of the complaint against de Ruiter is available that can be consulted in anonymous form on the [website](#) of the Association of Dutch Universities. There is no file available on the complaint against Rena Netjes, but there is an oral statement about this from the Clingendael Institute. The main part of the complaints was not whether we were right in our investigation. The complaint concerned that the complainants, journalists and editors-in-chief of *Nieuwsuur* and *Trouw*, were of the opinion that both of us had not adhered to the codes of scientific and journalistic integrity in the debate. The complaint lodged by both editors-in-chief against De Ruiter led to a formal procedure, which ultimately led to the Tilburg Executive Board's opinion and decision that the complaint had no basis. De Ruiter was therefore acquitted.

We have experienced the complaints against us as an attempt to silence us. After all, if it turned out that we had not adhered to the criteria of journalistic and scientific integrity, we would effectively have been silenced.

It is bizarre that in these times when [committees are considered to be set](#) up to protect scientists against the attacks of fake news and hate spreaders, we found respected media such as *Nieuwsuur* and *Trouw* against us.

Society benefits from an open debate on all possible subjects and that debate can be conducted at the cutting edge. But as even mainstream media tries behind the scenes to silence opponents, new boundaries have been crossed. We are pleased that the Netherlands' blame has been cleared. Our country has sincerely tried to contribute to the fight against jihadist organizations in Syria, which posed a major threat to the Syrians themselves and to the safety of European citizens. Things go wrong in a war, the situation on the various fronts is sometimes confusing, but supporting the enemy in any way, that is something the Netherlands has never done and we have argued that from the start of this 'news'.

For more information and comments, please contact us.

Rena Netjes, 00905527966753

Jan Jaap de Ruiter, 0031622994258