



*For immediate release*

## **Family of photojournalist murdered in Libya reveal that his passport was held by South African officials for years after his death**

*Eleven years on, the call for justice continues for the murder of photojournalist Anton Hammerl  
#JusticeforAnton*

**London, 20 May 2022** – The widow of photojournalist Anton Hammerl, Penny Sukhraj-Hammerl, has raised serious concerns about the handling of his case by the South African government.

At an event hosted by the Frontline Club, Ms Sukhraj-Hammerl announced for the first time that she is in possession of the passport Anton used to enter Libya in 2011.

The recovery of Anton’s passport, which was in his possession while he was in Libya, demonstrates that Anton’s remains were located after he was killed. Anton always carried his passport with him when reporting in the field, and eyewitnesses have confirmed to his family and their international legal team that he was carrying it on his person on the day he was killed.

Anton, a South African photojournalist who was living with his family in the UK, travelled from London to Libya in 2011 to cover the nation’s civil war. On 5 April 2011 Anton and three other journalists – James Foley, Clare Gillis and Manu Brabo – came under fire from forces loyal to the nation’s ruler, Colonel Gaddafi, while they were covering the conflict. Anton was shot and fatally wounded. The other three journalists were captured and detained. For 44 days, Anton’s family was led to believe that he was still alive and campaigned for his release alongside the families of the other journalists. However, they eventually discovered, on 19 May 2011, that he had been killed weeks before. There has never been a full investigation into his death, and his body has never been recovered.

Ms Sukhraj-Hammerl has now revealed that she received Anton’s passport in 2016 from a South African government official. At that point it had been in the custody of the South African government for at least three years.

In a letter to the South African government, Ms Sukhraj-Hammerl stated: *“More than a decade since Anton’s death, we still don’t know the location of his remains. We still don’t have a grave to visit. We still don’t know the truth. Your administration’s response? Silence.”*

She stated: *“Senior officials who dealt with our family around the time of Anton’s death must have known about the passport—but did not return it to us at the time. They did not even tell us they had it. This was an important development in Anton’s case and is likely to have led us to finding the whereabouts of Anton’s remains. Yet, South African officials remained silent.”*

Ms Sukhraj-Hammerl, through her legal team, first wrote to the South African government a year ago, in May 2021, to request a meeting to discuss the handling of the case. Despite further requests and chasing correspondence, she received no response. Responses to Freedom of Information (“FOI”) requests from South Africa’s Department of International Relations and Cooperation (“DIRCO”) did not disclose information relating to holding his passport.

Speaking at the Frontline Club about Anton’s passport, **Penny Sukhraj-Hammerl** said: *“Was this a cover up? I’m not sure. What we do know is that the officials that dealt with us in our search for Anton’s remains had his passport. They would have known that any information such as the whereabouts of his passport would be a lead for where his body might have been.”*

**Caoilfhionn Gallagher QC**, human rights lawyer and counsel for the family, said: *“Anton Hammerl entered Libya at a time when Gaddafi’s forces were suspected of serious violations of international law, including war crimes and crimes against humanity, to bring the world accurate accounts of what was truly happening. He then became a victim of the regime’s criminal actions himself, killed for being a journalist. It is deeply concerning that his own government has failed to do everything in its power to secure accountability for his murder. We now know that South African officials held vital evidence for at least three years which they failed to pass on to the family promptly, and they have still not answered basic questions. Where did the passport come from? When was it sent to them, and under what circumstances? Answering these questions could provide vital leads to locating Anton’s remains.”*

Journalist James (Jim) Foley was working with Anton on the day he died and was an eyewitness to Anton’s murder on 5 April 2011. **Diane Foley**, James Foley’s mother and president and founder of the James W Foley Legacy Foundation, spoke at the event. She said: *“Accountability for perpetrators of violence against journalists is essential to stop the deliberate targeting of our courageous reporters.”*

**Matthew Caruana Galizia**, journalist and director of the Daphne Caruana Galizia Foundation, said: *“Every victim of murder, every family, deserves justice. Progress in holding Anton’s killers to account is progress for all.”*

The event was held as the safety of journalists in warzones is once again at the forefront of public consciousness given the fallout from the war in Ukraine.

**Ends**

## Notes for editors:

1. Anton Hammerl was an award-winning photojournalist. To learn more about him, his work, and the #JusticeforAnton campaign visit [www.justiceforanton.com](http://www.justiceforanton.com)
2. The event was held on 19 May 2022, 19.00 BST, at the Frontline Club, London, and chaired by journalist Inigo Gilmore. It was held on 19 May to coincide with the eleventh anniversary of the day that Anton's family found out that he had been killed six weeks earlier by Gaddafi loyalists, having been falsely led to believe by Libyan authorities that he was alive and well.
3. Penny Sukhraj-Hammerl is represented by an international legal team from Doughty Street Chambers: barristers Caoilfhionn Gallagher QC, Tatyana Eatwell and Catherine Meredith.
4. For any media queries, please contact Bronwyn Friedlander, Justice for Anton campaign, on +44 (0) 7939 320 759 or [bronwyn.friedlander@gmail.com](mailto:bronwyn.friedlander@gmail.com).