Beat: Vips

Prominent Curacao politician Helmin Wiels shot dead at beach

-, 06.05.2013, 23:04 Time

USPA News - A prominent politician on the Dutch Caribbean island of Curacao, whose pro-independence party won the general election last year, was shot dead Sunday at a public beach in the capital Willemstad, prosecutors said on Monday. He was 54 years old.

The shooting happened Sunday afternoon local time when at least one gunman opened fire at Helmin Wiels on Marie Pampoen beach in Willemstad. He was hit by five bullets and pronounced dead at the scene, prime minister Daniel Hodge said during a news conference on late Sunday evening. Wiels was the leader of the Pueblo Soberano (Sovereign People) party that campaigns for independence from the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Curacao is an independent country since October 2010 but remains in the kingdom, which also includes the Caribbean countries Aruba and Sint Maarten and the Netherlands in Western Europe. "The Public Prosecutor`s Office Curaçao formed a `Major Investigation Team` (TGO) after the fatal shooting at Marie Pampoen on Sunday evening," the office said in a statement on Monday. "All partners in the judicial chain, led by various public prosecutors, are participating in this." Pueblo Soberano won last year`s general election with 22.6 percent of the vote, giving it five seats in the 21-member Estates of Curacao. Wiels had received death threats in the past and would typically have a bodyguard with him, but the bodyguard had already been sent home at the time of the shooting. Authorities said Monday there had been no arrests yet, but witnesses reported seeing up to three unidentified suspects who fled the scene.

Article online:
https://www.uspa24.com/bericht-927/prominent-curacao-politician-helmin-wiels-shot-dead-at-beach.html

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UPA United Press Agency LTD
483 Green Lanes
UK, London N13NV 4BS
contact (at) unitedpressagency.com
Official Federal Reg. No. 7442619