

McV Scores Major Win for CNN

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The Court of First Instance, San Juan Part, issued a writ of *mandamus* requested by CNN and a local journalism organization investigating the death toll of Hurricane Maria. The Puerto Rico government has seven days to produce death certificates and related information which the Court found to be a matter of public record.

CNN had filed *mandamus* petition on February 21, 2018, and it was subsequently consolidated with a similar case filed by the Center for Investigative Journalism. The Puerto Rico government had refused to provide the requested documents arguing that such documents contained information that had to be kept private to protect the identities of the deceased and of the persons who furnished the information. Additionally, the government argued that the information requested was preliminary and would only be final when it is published by the National Center for Health Statistics (a part of the Centers for Disease Control) in November and December 2018. Finally, the Puerto Rico government claimed that releasing the allegedly preliminary information before it becomes final would affect the government's credibility.

The Court found that the data contained in death certificates is a matter of public record and that the constitutional guarantee to a free press cannot be restricted when the government has not established a compelling interest to prevent the information from being released.

McV Attorneys **Juan A. Marqués-Díaz** and **Isabel Torres-Sastre** represented CNN in this important case.

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