

Seven years without Sophia

Again, it is October 28, the day that keeps coming back to tell us, mercilessly, that yet another year has passed since our Sophia disappeared in Uganda.

Seven very painful and difficult years, wondering every day where Sophia is and what happened to her. Will we ever find out?

Will there ever come a day that Sophia is found and returns home, so the dark memory of October 28, will slowly fade away? Or do we have a life-long sentence of being torn apart by insecurity and fear about her fate?

Sophia, a medical student, came to Uganda to work as an intern at Lubaga Hospital in Kampala for eight weeks, which she enjoyed thoroughly.

After that she went on a trip through the country, before going home. On the sixth day of this trip she disappeared, in Murchison Falls National Park.

The circumstances are unclear, a proper investigation did not take place at the time. Instead, authorities, both in Uganda and the Netherlands, conveniently assumed a 'fatal accident' although there was no evidence to back this up.

We have not been able to accept this and strongly believe that other scenarios are possible. I often say that I came to Uganda voluntarily only once. I wanted to see my daughter at work in a hospital there and travel a bit myself. I spent two interesting weeks in Uganda and frequently saw



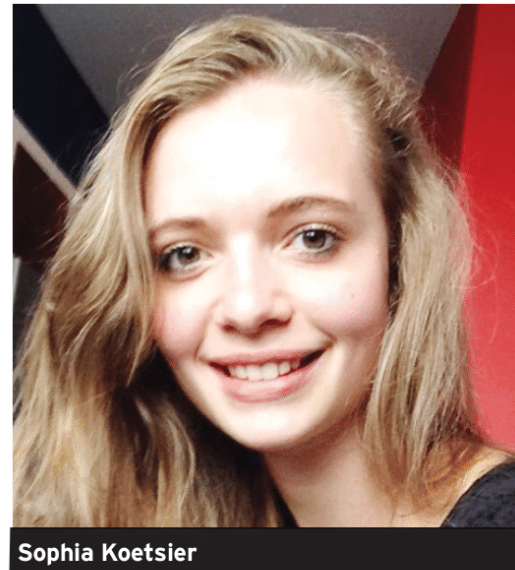
Sophia. Then the unthinkable happened and I had to go home alone, a broken mother. But one who pulled herself together and determined not to give up on her child.

Thus far I have made 19 trips to Uganda since then, because I have to.

To do all I can to find Sophia.

Ugandan authorities have acknowledged that a serious investigation did not take place at the time. Early this year, the former director Criminal Investigation Directorate (CID), Grace Akullo, named three high-priority cases in a televised speech. One of them was Sophia's disappearance.

As reported in this newspaper on September 6, the current director CID, Tom Magambo, has set up a team to reinvestigate the mysterious disappearance of Sophia. This gives us hope that one day we might no longer be lost in a jungle of question marks about



Sophia Koetsier

"Everyone, including viewers who did not know anything about this, will understand why you will keep fighting for this wonderful daughter and sister."

Another one said: "Heartbreaking documentary about the disappearance of my former classmate Sophia Koetsier. I remember Sophia as an especially inquisitive, independent and vivacious person who marched to the beat of her own drum." We have managed to have an English subtitled version made of this television portrait. There is a lot of interest in the story outside of the Netherlands, not only in Uganda. We want it to spread as far and wide as possible.

A link can be found here: <https://www.findsophia.org/2022/10/14/sophias-tv-portrait-with-english-subtitles/>

Soon I shall be returning to the country that took our girl away from us and has, to this day, not revealed where she is. These journeys are tough, but are made a little less hard by some people there who I may call friends. I always carry Sophia's now expired passport with me and some of her clothes. The hope of finding our beautiful girl remains.

As I heard someone say the other day: "Never rule out the unbelievable."

To which I would like to add: "When nothing is sure, everything is possible."

what happened to Sophia. And most of all, that she is found. It is hard to keep going, but giving up is not an option. Doing nothing usually leads to nowhere and if all I can do is make sure that Sophia is not forgotten, then that is what I must do.

Dutch Public Television has made a 40 minute film about Sophia and her mysterious disappearance in Uganda. It was not easy to do, but we thought it very important that people can see who Sophia is. Also, that it is a mystery indeed and that it is far too simple to be cast aside as 'fatal accident'.

Judging by the reactions we received after the broadcast on Dutch television, the film has succeeded in this. One reaction ended with:

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