

**WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY, 3 May 2011**  
**Oil Cultural Center,**  
**Baghdad, Iraq**

**10:00**            **Doors Open**

**10:30 – 11:30**    **Welcoming remarks and speeches**

- Opening Speeches
  - George Papagiannis, UNESCO, Welcoming Remarks
  - Mufid Al Jezairy, On Freedom of Expression and Freedom of the Press
  - UNAMI SRSG Ad Melkert, speaking on behalf of the UN and the international community
  - Professor Dr. Hamid Jaad, Media College, University of Baghdad

Masters of Ceremony: Mr. Emad Jassim (Al Hurra TV), Mrs. Vivian Ghanim (Al Meda TV)

A Minute of Silence to remember those Iraqi journalists who have died in pursuit of a story.

- **Introduction of New Media Roundtable by President of the newly founded Iraqi Bloggers Union, (Mr Ammar Bin Hatim)**

**11:30 – 12:30**    **Roundtable One: New Media:** *Ms. Irada Zedan (Journalist), Dr Al Faisal (Deputy Dean, Media College, University of Baghdad), Mr. Mazen Aliasari (Journalist and Blogger), Dr. Nada (Media College, University of Baghdad). Hayder Al Saidy (Director of Delta Systems)*

- How to promote internet and social networks as a platform for democratic discussion and civic participation
- How to empower bloggers and individual users in content production and meaningful participation to enrich citizen's access to information and exchange of ideas

**12:30 – 13:30**    **Open Session**

**13:30 – 14:30**    **Roundtable Two: Media Law and Freedom of Expression:** *Dr Hassan Shaban (Judge), Mr Jabbar Tarad Ekab (Chief Editor, Iraqi Media Agency), Mr Kamel G..D (Ministry of Human Rights), and Mr D. Mohamed (Ministry of Human Rights)*

- What are the legal and human rights implications on freedom of expression that the new media presents – what do we want to see happen in Iraq?
- A historical overview of Freedom of Expression in Iraq

**14:30 – 15:00**    **Open Session**

**15:00 – 16:00**    **Roundtable Three: The 2011 Journalism Freedom Observatory Report on the Status of Media Freedom in Iraq:** *Zyad Abdulhamza (Journalism Freedom Observatory)*

**16:00**            **Doors Close**

**Additional Activities:**

- **Blogger Hub: Wireless forum open to the public.** Iraq's most well-known bloggers will go live to the region and the world; they will train guests on the professional use of new media tools
- **Photojournalism and Editorial Cartoon exhibition**
- **Film Screening, "My Country" : Produced by Al Mada Cultural Institution**

*\*This event was also made possible with the generous financial support of UNESCO, UNAMI, IMS, AL MUSTAKBLE, DELTA SYSTEMS, AL MADA CULTURAL INSTITUTION, IRAQI SOCIETY FOR PHOTOGRAPHY and INTERNEWS.*

## World Press Freedom Day 2011: 21st Century Media: New Frontiers, New Barriers

Twenty years after the call for the establishment of UNESCO World Press Freedom Day, the arrival of the digital revolution—the evolution of the Internet, the emergence of new forms of media, and the rise of online social networks—has reshaped the media landscape and made “the press” of 2011 something that those who authored the Windhoek Declaration on press freedom in 1991 could not have imagined.

It is well recognized that the growth of the Internet has greatly expanded the ability of individuals, groups, and others to enhance their freedom of expression and their rights to seek, receive and impart information as recognized by international human rights standards. Specifically, new media platforms have made it possible for almost any citizen to communicate to a large audience; for example, bloggers around the world are challenging authorities, exposing corruption, and expressing their opinions via the Internet. These new frontiers of media have enriched news and information resources and reshaped what has been traditionally the realm of print press, broadcasters, and news agencies.

Internet-based applications, particularly the emergence of social networks, user-generated content, and micro-blogging have enabled nearly every Internet user to be a potential broadcaster or newspaper with the ability to rapidly create, modify, and share digital content and knowledge with millions of other users both locally and globally.

These changes introduce new patterns of communication, break down country borders, and create new forms of creative expression, journalism, and participation.

This unprecedented decentralization of information brought by the Internet has empowered citizens to access information, express themselves, and participate in public debate more than ever. Even in areas where Internet penetration is low, citizens are using mobile phones to send information via text messages. Using micro-blogging via mobile phones and other such Internet tools, political dissidents under repressive regimes have been able to let the outside world know what is actually happening in their countries.

Nevertheless, we must be cognizant of the fact that how individuals can be empowered to produce quality content and gain the necessary media and information literacy in this newer and more complex information environment remains a challenge.

Topics for Discussion:

- How to promote Internet and social networks as a platform for democratic discussion and civic participation?
- How to empower bloggers and individual users in content production and meaningful participation to enrich citizen's access to information and exchange of ideas?
- How to enhance media and information literacy of readers, listeners, and viewers; how to help them learn to find the information they need and critically evaluate the information?
- What is the role of traditional media in authenticating or verifying information distributed via social networks?

- How to empower marginalized communities to access information through digital communications tools including mobile phones?
- Would more traditional media and information literacy approach suffice in this digital age to adequately empower users?

Historically, telecommunication, broadcasting, and other media were separate industry segments; they used different technologies and were governed by different regulations. The recent convergence of communications is dissolving established barriers, not only between professional journalists and citizens using the new media tools, but also in the legal and regulatory environment.

However, the legal system has been slow to adjust to the changes caused by the convergence of telecommunication and broadcasting (including public service broadcasting) and the merger of broadband operators and Internet service providers.

Topics for Discussion:

- What are legal and human rights implications of social networks on freedom of expression, privacy, and personal data protection?
- How to protect bloggers and users' right to freedom of expression on the Internet and social networks?
- How to find applicable standards and legislation and share good practices on privacy protection?
- What is the role of Internet service providers/web hosting companies? Are they neutral bystanders? And how to treat conflict of jurisdiction created by the trans-border nature of the web and social networks?
- Which effect does the new convergence of media have on the enabling environment for freedom of expression?

One of the most widespread uses of the Internet is blogging. The number of blogs worldwide increased from 22 million in 2005 to more than 100 million by 2010. Among the most distinct features of blogs are their decentralized nature and the speed at which information is disseminated. Bloggers also face some of the same risks and threats as professional journalists, as accounts of the arrests of bloggers, the filtering of content, and the shutting down of service providers has made clear.

Growth of the Internet has also notably increased governments' surveillance power, creating new threats to professional news media and citizens, as well as raising concerns over the difficulty of guaranteeing free and unhindered flow of information. Popular social networking and micro-blogging sites, while giving ordinary users a voice, can also be used by governments to identify and locate or even arrest citizens.

Topics for Discussion:

- How are governments using digital tools to track down and arrest or silence bloggers?
- How can citizen reporters protect themselves and evade censorship and surveillance?
- How are organizations dedicated to the defense and protection of journalists and freedom of expression affected by the rise of digital media? Are they operating any differently now than they were 20 years ago?
- All over the world, journalists continue to be subjected to physical attacks, murders, and imprisonment. What do trends show?

The rise of the Internet and other digital media pose a particular challenge for traditional news outlets including print and broadcasting. In many parts of the world, newspaper sales have declined since the early 2000s, and some have opted only to have electronic versions of their publications.

It is no secret that journalism is undergoing a shift: "We don't own the media anymore," said the director of the BBC World Service and Global News division back in 2005. Media owners and managers face some great challenges in adjusting to the new digital world: to continue to fund newsrooms staffed by professional journalists or to rely on blogs and other user-generated content.

## Topics for Discussion:

- Will technological development hurt journalistic integrity as a whole? Will news quality and reliability suffer, since anyone can become a reporter?
- How to ensure that journalism remains independent of political and commercial interference and influence in the face of changing revenue models?
- Are there possible alternative funding models in addition to advertising, subscriptions, and donations?
- Do digital media and traditional news media have a competing or mutually complementary relationship? What would be needed to create an enabling environment for synergy between the two?
- How will traditional forms of media continue to be relevant in the Internet era?
- How will journalists working in traditional print and broadcast media employ new tools in their reporting and the distribution of their news content?

***UNESCO, as the UN Agency with the mandate to promote freedom of expression, recognizes that freedom of expression is central to building strong democracies, contributing to good governance, promoting civic participation and the rule of law, and encouraging human development and security. The right to freedom of expression applies as much to the Internet as to the more traditional forms of media—press, radio, and television. The challenge is to fully optimize the potential of the Internet and digital media while not compromising civil liberties including the right to freedom of expression and privacy.***

## Human Rights perspective on Freedom of Expression

The Human Rights Committee (HRC), which is the body of independent experts that monitors implementation of the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights under the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human rights, defines the rights of freedom of opinion and freedom of expression as indispensable pre-conditions for the full development of the person. They constitute the foundation stone of every free and democratic society. The two rights are closely related and are interdependent: freedom of expression providing the vehicle for the exchange and development of opinions.

According to the HRC, the obligation to respect the rights of freedom of opinion and freedom of expression binds every State Party to the Covenant. State responsibility extends to all branches of government (executive, legislative and judicial) and other public or governmental authorities, at whatever level – national, regional or local.

The HRC draws attention to the fact that a free, uncensored and unhindered press or other media are essential in any society for ensuring the respect and protection of the rights of freedom of opinion and freedom of expression, as well as underpinning the enjoyment of all other rights. It constitutes one of the cornerstones of a democratic society. The free communication of information and ideas about public and political issues between citizens, candidates and elected representatives is essential, and this requires a free press and other media able to comment on public issues without censorship or restraint and to inform public opinion. Article 19 not only protects the right of the public to receive information, but also the specific function of journalists to share information with the communities they serve.

Any restrictions on the operation of websites, blogs or any other internet-based, electronic or other such information dissemination system, including systems to support such communication, such as internet service providers or search engines, must be compatible with the respect of the rights or reputation of others or the protection of national security or of public order or of public health or morals. Any restrictions must be content-specific and not simply generic bans on the operation of certain sites or a prohibition on a site from publishing material solely on the basis that it may be critical of the government or the political social system sanctioned by the government.

A person exercising his or her right of freedom of opinion or expression is to be protected from harm, including arbitrary arrest, torture, threats to life and murder. Journalists are frequently subjected to such threats,

intimidation and attacks because of their activities. So too are human rights defenders, particularly those persons who are engaged in the gathering and analysis of information on human rights issues and who publish human rights-related reports. All State Parties have the obligation to vigorously investigate allegations of attacks, intimidation or harassment directed at journalists, human rights defenders and other persons and are required to ensure that all perpetrators of such acts are held accountable according to law.