

## INTERNATIONAL DECLARATION ON THE PROTECTION OF JOURNALISTS

The following document aims at highlighting core principles related to the protection of journalists, taking into account the respective responsibilities of different actors, including states and state institutions, inter-governmental organisations, non-governmental organisations, media houses and journalists themselves.

### It includes two parts:

**1. The Declaration** summarises international principles related to the protection of journalists covering dangerous environments and victims of human rights violations. It focuses on the responsibilities of states and relevant institutions in this area, including law enforcement and security forces, and the judiciary.

It is based on existing international human rights and humanitarian law and norms – including resolutions, declarations, treaties, conventions, general comments and other statements by IGOs – related to the protection of journalists.

The Declaration does not develop new principles, but is rather solely based on the principles stated in existing instruments.

**2. The Guidelines on Media Organisations' Responsibilities** highlight steps and remedies that news media organisations and journalists should consider in order to strive for greater safety.

It is based on existing principles adopted by news organisations related to journalists' safety, as well as recommendations by experts.

The Guidelines can be endorsed by media houses that want to demonstrate publicly that they are taking a stand to protect their journalists.

The purpose of the Guidelines is to encourage best practices within the news media industry.

### DECLARATION

The undersigned media institutions and international organisations affirm the importance and universality of the rights and principles stated in Art. 19 of the U.N. Universal Declaration of Human Rights as fundamental to the protection of human rights and dignities,

*Recognising* the collective and individual roles that states must play in preserving the rights to freedom of expression and press freedom, without distinction as to race, colour, gender, religion, political or other opinion, and in enabling people the full enjoyment of such rights; in particular the right of people to access information of public interest and to be informed about the issues and events that affect their lives,

*Acknowledging* the value of cooperation between state institutions and media organisations in promoting press freedom and the protection of journalists; in creating a safe environment that guarantees freedom

of expression and access to information; in addressing serious violations of journalists' rights and press freedom in general; in effectively ending impunity and lack of legal accountability for crimes against journalists; in offering proper reparations and redress for victims and their families; and in protecting journalists' sources from violence and retaliation,

*Recognising* that the lack of security for journalists resulting from armed conflicts, internal disturbances and political crises is no justification for forfeiting the duties and responsibilities of protection incumbent upon states through their commitment to international instruments such as relevant U.N. General Assembly (68/163) and (69/185) and Security Council resolutions (2222/2015 and 1738/2006), the final recommendations of the seminar of the Human Rights Council on the protection of journalists and media organisations in areas of armed conflict, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), UNESCO's declarations related to journalists' safety, joint declarations of the U.N., OAS, OSCE and AU special rapporteurs in this area, and the U.N. plan of action on safety of journalists,

*Stressing* the complementary nature of this Declaration to existing instruments, such as those developed as part of the U.N. Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity, and the Global Safety Principles and Practices related to the protection of freelance journalists, and

*Reaffirming* the commitment of media organisations to respect and apply the principles and standards of professional integrity and ethical journalism, and to cooperate to the extent possible with organisations and institutions concerned with the protection of journalists, so to maximise safety guarantees for their journalists and media staff,

**We declare:**

Item (1)

All journalists and other media professionals have the right to the full enjoyment of the rights stipulated by international human rights law and international humanitarian law while exercising their right to seek, receive and impart information and ideas, regardless of frontiers

Item (2)

All journalists and media professionals have the right to protection from violence, threats, retaliation, de facto or de jure adverse discrimination against themselves and their family members, or any other arbitrary action that results from the exercise of the rights referred to in this Declaration. They also have the right to life; the right to freedom from torture, arbitrary arrest and detention, and unwarranted government surveillance; and the right to an effective remedy.

Item (3)

According to principles of international humanitarian law, all journalists and media professionals are entitled to all types of protection granted to civilians in times of conflict; attacks against journalists and media professionals shall be considered war crimes. Journalists lose their right to such protection if they participate directly in hostilities. Furthermore, war correspondents, if captured, are entitled to prisoner-of-war status.

Journalists shall not be prevented from interviewing civilians and combatants, taking pictures, filming and making audio recordings in times of conflict for the purpose of publication.

Item (4)

States are obliged to conduct effective, immediate, thorough, independent and impartial investigations into all crimes and attacks against journalists. They are to prosecute those responsible for these violations and, when relevant, to provide adequate reparations for victims and their families.

Item (5)

Journalists and other media professionals are not to be subjected to any limitations while doing their journalistic work, except for those limitations established by law and intended solely to ensure the protection of the rights and freedoms of others living in a democratic society without compromising freedom of expression as enshrined in Art. 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Art. 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

States are obliged to strengthen mechanisms that ensure freedom of expression and freedom of information in accordance with international standards in this area, as well as enforcing legislation aimed at promoting press freedom and access to information. <sup>(1)</sup>

Item (6)

In countries where attacks on journalists are frequent, states should pass and fully and effectively implement relevant laws and mechanisms for the protection of journalists under threat. States should make available the necessary financial resources to ensure that journalists in their respective countries can operate safely and without fear of retaliation and that perpetrators of attacks against journalists are brought to justice.

Item (7)

All journalists have the right to access information and documents related to the status of investigations into attacks against journalists, so as to hold authorities accountable for any failure to bring the perpetrators of crimes against journalists to justice. States should provide training to law enforcement and judicial officials so as to raise awareness of obligations relative to the protection of journalists and the prosecution of perpetrators.

Item (8)

Journalists have the right to be protected from any violations of their rights and must be granted legal, medical and psychological aid in case such violations occur. Perpetrators of such violations should be brought to justice and denied impunity.

Item (9)

Governments should reflect their commitment to media freedom and the safety of journalists in their foreign and aid policies and make use of bilateral and multilateral fora to pressure states that do not meet their international obligations to ensure the safety of journalists working within their borders and to prosecute those responsible for all attacks on the media that occur on their territory.

---

<sup>(1)</sup> Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, A/HRC/24/23, 1 July 2013.

## **GUIDELINES ON MEDIA ORGANISATIONS' RESPONSIBILITIES**

### Item (10)

Media institutions are to spare no effort in adopting the best safety protocols for their journalists and should allocate an appropriate portion of their budget to this purpose, each according to its resources, but in full awareness of the fact that the lack of financial resources does not justify the failure of news organisations to do everything in their power to protect journalists and their rights.

Media institutions should undertake to do everything that is reasonably possible according to professional and institutional standards to provide for a colleague and his or her immediate family in the case of death or imprisonment.

### Item (11)

General safety training for all journalists, including elements related to digital safety, emotional and psychological well-being and environmental hazards, as well as specific training for journalists who cover dangerous assignments or operate in a dangerous environment greatly increases safety awareness and reduces risk. Media companies should do everything possible to make such training available to their journalists at an affordable cost or at no cost. Training must always be of an appropriately high quality and recognised as such.

### Item (12)

Media institutions should develop and implement procedures and tools aimed at ensuring the physical and psychological safety as well as the digital security of journalists. .

### Item (13)

Journalists should be informed about their rights and duties under international laws as well as the national laws of the countries in which they operate. They should also be aware of international human rights standards and principles, as well as international humanitarian law, so as to strengthen their ability to cover and expose human rights violations and breaches of international humanitarian law.

Journalists should not be obliged to cover dangerous assignments that involve serious recognisable and well-grounded risk.

### Item (14)

In addition to the safety hazards affecting all journalists, women journalists are confronted with gender-specific safety concerns, which require dedicated attention and awareness.

### Item (15)

Public support for journalism and journalists contributes to the latter's safety. Conversely, the lack of such support often fuels attacks against journalists and reduces pressure on governments to end impunity for such attacks. In most cases, the lack of public support is a consequence of political or

other tensions and verbal attacks in the public discourse. However, credibility and independence of the media and the practice of ethical journalistic standards contribute to attracting public support and should be valued. Occasional breaches in the professional behaviour of journalists should never serve as justification for attacks.

Item (16)

Solidarity among journalists is vital when members of the profession are confronted with threats and attacks. A news boycott of any group threatening journalists, for example, sends a strong signal that the community is united against its aggressors. Cooperation among media organisations in exposing crimes against journalists and creating a global campaign against attacks on journalists can be effective tools. An attack on a journalist anywhere is an attack on journalism everywhere. Moreover, an attack on journalists or journalism is an attack on the public's right to be informed and to govern itself democratically.

Item (17)

Media organisations in all regions should consider signing on to the Global Safety Principles and Practices related to the protection of freelance journalists, which are complementary to this Declaration, and give these principles and practices effect.

Item (18)

Nothing in this document may be interpreted as permitting states to support and promote activities of individuals, groups, institutions or organisations that are incompatible with the provisions of the charter of the United Nations.