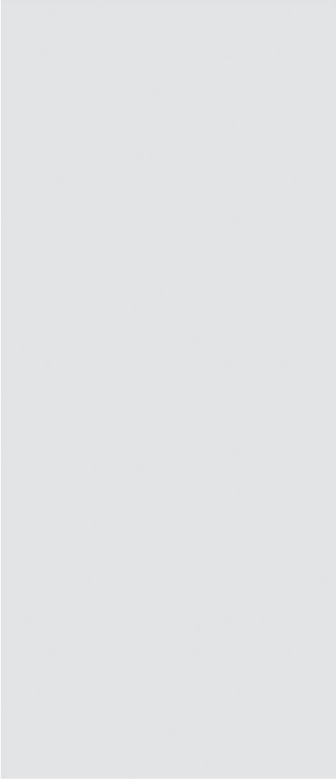





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



The extent of the risks faced by those exercising their right to express opinions and disseminate information is demonstrated by the figure of 827 killings recorded by UNESCO over ten years. To this, one needs to add the numerous other violations endured by journalists¹, which include kidnappings, arbitrary detention, torture, intimidation and harassment, both offline and online, and seizure or destruction of material. Overcoming all these threats is needed for measuring progress on the Sustainable Development Goal Target 16.10 on ensuring public access to information and protecting fundamental freedoms within the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This Report is focused exclusively on the worst violations, i.e. the killings of journalists, in line with the IPDC Council's 2008 Decision on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity.



¹ The term "journalists" in this report covers "journalists, media workers and social media producers who generate a significant amount of public-interest journalism", in line with the IPDC Decision on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity adopted by the IPDC Council in 2014.



KILLINGS OF JOURNALISTS IN 2014-2015 AND OVER THE LAST DECADE: AN OVERVIEW

In 2014-2015 alone, 213 journalists lost their lives; 2015 was the second deadliest year for journalists in the last ten years with 115 journalists killed. It was also marked by a single, unprecedented attack against a media outlet which was deliberately targeted resulting in the death of eight journalists.² In 2014, UNESCO recorded 98 cases of killings of journalists.

The Arab States region registered the highest number of journalists' killings in 2014-2015, with 78 deaths, representing 36,5% of all cases. The ongoing conflicts in several countries of the region can partly explain this trend. In Latin America and the Caribbean, 51 journalists (24%) were killed; in Asia and the Pacific 34 (16%); in Africa 27 (12,5%); in Central and Eastern Europe 12 (6%); and in Western Europe and North America 11 (5%). Whereas over the last decade, Asia and the Pacific region was the region second most affected by journalists' killings, in 2014-2015, it was Latin America and the Caribbean.³

There was a slight increase in the number of female journalists killed – i.e. nine per annum compared to an average of four in previous years – but men continue to represent an overwhelming majority of the victims of fatal attacks: almost 92% in 2014-2015. Killings are, however, only the tip of the iceberg and women face certain gender-based threats, such as sexual harassment and violence, that are not reflected in these statistics.

2015 WAS THE SECOND DEADLIEST YEAR FOR JOURNALISTS IN THE LAST TEN YEARS...

The category of journalists most targeted by killings over the last decade have been print media journalists; in 2014-2015, however, the majority of journalists killed were television journalists. A sharp increase was observed in 2015 in the number of online journalists⁴ killed, with 21 cases (18%) compared to just two in 2014. Almost half of these were Syrian journalists and bloggers covering the conflict in Syria.

Almost 90% of the victims in 2014-2015 were local journalists, confirming a trend observed throughout the last decade. Freelance journalists, who work independently and often without adequate protections, are widely considered the most vulnerable group in the media sector. Forty journalists who were freelancers or citizen journalists operating online were killed in 2014-2015, representing 19% of all cases (the same percentage was observed in 2006-2015).

Reflecting the extreme vulnerability of journalists working in conflict zones, 59% of all fatalities – or 126 cases - were registered in countries where there has been armed conflict.⁵

² Attack against the French satirical paper Charlie Hebdo, 7 January 2015, Paris, France.

³ The regional breakdown in this Report corresponds to UNESCO's regional groupings

⁴ These include journalists working for online media outlets and social media producers producing journalism.

⁵ The 11th and 12th Report of the UN Secretary-General, on the protection of civilians in armed conflict covered the following countries: Afghanistan, Central African Republic, Colombia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Libya, Mali, Myanmar, Nigeria, Palestine, Pakistan, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Ukraine, and Yemen (Report presented to the UN Security Council, June 2015 and May 2016)

B ADDRESSING IMPUNITY: MEMBER STATES' RESPONSES TO UNESCO'S REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

An important step in addressing the high levels of journalists' killings is combatting impunity which perpetuates a cycle of violence against journalists. This is one of the key objectives of the UNESCO Director-General's request for information from Member States on the status of judicial enquiries into the killings of journalists condemned by UNESCO, as per the 2008 Decision on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity and successive decisions of the Intergovernmental Council of the International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC).

Overall, since UNESCO began requesting information for the Director-General's reports to IPDC, covering the period of killings from 2006 onwards and up until the end of 2015, 59 Member States of the 70 Member States contacted have responded at least once on the judicial follow-up to journalists' killings, while 11 have never sent a response.

A noteworthy development in respect of requests for information issued this year is the very substantial increase in the number of responses received from Member States on the status of judicial enquiries into the killings of journalists condemned by UNESCO's Director-General. Almost 65% of the countries concerned (i.e. 40 out of 62) responded to the Director-General's request, compared to 27% (16 out of 59) for the last Director-General's report in 2014; in 2015, 47% of countries (27 out of 57) responded. This trend appears to indicate

growing recognition among Member States of the importance of IPDC's monitoring mechanism and the need to give attention to impunity.

The Director-General has cumulatively received information from 59 Member States on 402 cases out of the 827 cases condemned in the last decade. However, among these 402 cases, only 63 have been reported as resolved, representing 16% of the cases for which information was received, and 8% of total cases. For the remaining 339 cases (or 40% of total cases) for which information was received, either a police or judicial enquiry is reportedly still underway, or the cases have been archived or deemed to be unresolved. Finally, for 425 cases, or 51% of total cases, either no information was received or the Member State in whose jurisdiction the killing occurred sent only an acknowledgment of receiving the Director-General's request.

Of the 63 resolved cases, 20 concern Latin America and the Caribbean (representing 11% of all cases in the region), 14 Central and Eastern Europe (representing 39%), 13 the Asia-Pacific region (representing 6%), eight Western Europe and North America (representing 57%), four Africa (representing 4%) and another four the Arab region (representing 1,5%).

CONCLUSION

Media and freedom of expression are under siege with fatal attacks on producers of journalism as the most serious cases. Over the course of the last decade, a total of 827 journalists have lost their lives for bringing information to the public. On average, this constitutes one casualty every five days.

With only 8% of cases reported as resolved (63 out of 827), impunity for these crimes is alarmingly high. This impedes the free flow of information that is so vital for sustainable development, peace building, and the social welfare of humankind. This widespread impunity fuels and perpetuates a cycle of violence that silences media and stifles public debate.

The response rate of concerned Member States to the UNESCO Director-General's request for information on the judicial process of these cases has however seen a significant increase. The issues of the safety of journalists and impunity have also received increased attention from the international community, as reflected by the nine international resolutions on safety adopted in the UN in recent years and by the inclusion of journalists' safety as an indicator of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The vital role of information in achieving a better world for each and every one of us is widely recognized, as it serves not only as a goal in itself but also as an enabler of wider positive change.

It is important that this current progress does not lose momentum. The safety of journalists can only be ensured by tackling the "three Ps" – prevention, protection and prosecution – via an all-encompassing approach, involving each stakeholder. This is the approach of the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity. In order to secure peace, democracy, and sustainable development, it is imperative that the free flow information remains uninhibited.

