



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization



UNITED NATIONS  
**HUMAN RIGHTS**  
OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER

# The UN and the Safety of Journalists

**Resource Kit for UN Staff**  
by the UN Focal Points Network  
on Safety of Journalists - 2021 version



# Credits and Acknowledgements

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Photo credit: Ahmad Al-Bazzi





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## Foreword: Why this Resource Kit

Too often, journalists and media workers face threats and attacks in the pursuit of their profession. Recent years have seen a rise in the scale and number of attacks against the physical safety of journalists and media workers, as well as incidents affecting their ability to exercise freedom of expression. This includes physical attacks, killings, threats of prosecution, arrests, imprisonment, denial of journalistic access, harassment and failure to investigate and prosecute crimes against them. The proportion of journalists killed in non-conflict situations has increased in recent years, and since 2017 has exceeded the number of those killed in countries experiencing armed conflict.

Journalists are also facing intimidation through misuse of the law and through State authorities' efforts to discredit their work. As well as an increased number of different attacks against journalists (i.e. online and attacks and harassment), public trust in journalism and the notion of information have been eroded.

The media landscape has rapidly evolved as new forms of media and communication have emerged. New technologies allow for the rapid spread of targeted disinformation and smear campaigns. This has not only made the issue of safety and free media increasingly complex, but has also contributed to an erosion of public trust in journalism in certain areas. Impunity for crimes against journalists remains the largest obstacle in ensuring their safety, which contributes to the hampering the free flow of information. Its chilling effect can lead to further human rights violations and abuses, the shrinking of civil space, and can throttle the sustainable development efforts of all stakeholders.

The safety of journalists is quintessential to ensure and protect the rights to freedom of expression, access to information and media freedom within societies. It is part of SDG 16.10 on public access to information and fundamental freedoms, which is significant in order to achieve all other Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), such as gender equality, climate change, eliminating poverty and reducing inequalities. But what is the UN doing to promote safety of journalists? Which UN bodies have a specific mandate and record of accomplishing

such actions? What is the role of the other agencies whose mandate is not directly related to the issue of safety of journalists? How is the UN's work on safety of journalists coordinated?

All whilst addressing these questions, this Resource Kit "UN and the Safety of Journalists" provides easily accessible information and employable tools to non-specialised UN staff at the national, regional and headquarters level on issues related to the safety of journalists and impunity.

UN agencies have a key role to play in promoting a free, independent and pluralistic media environment and in protecting journalists.

In 2017, in order to help create the environment journalists need to perform their vital work, the United Nations Secretary-General decided to mobilize a network of focal points from throughout the UN system to propose specific steps to intensify our efforts to enhance the safety of journalists and media workers.

During this critical period, this Resource Kit is part of the implementation of the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity. It aims at empowering UN managers and teams that contribute to a free and safe environment for journalists and media workers in diverse ways, both in conflict and non-conflict situations, with a view to strengthening peace, democracy and development worldwide.

**Audrey Azoulay**  
*Director-General, UNESCO*

**Michelle Bachelet**  
*High Commissioner for Human Rights*



Photo credit: OHCHR





## Background

### Media Freedom Matters to the UN

#### Free and independent media are essential for sustainable development

The work by journalists and the media is the embodiment of the fundamental human rights to freedom of expression and information. When journalists are not allowed to seek and publish information freely, independently and safely, citizens' right to freedom of information is curbed. The result is a society where civic space is reduced, administrators are not in the position to make informed decisions on issues of public interest, and citizens are limited in their capacity to participate in democratic discourse. Freedom of information and expression are both prerequisites and enablers of the achievement of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, which seeks to “promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.”

More specifically, SDG target 16.10 aims to “ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements” (see page 16).

Photo credit: Getty Images

#### Investigative journalism leads to life-saving policies

Using the Right to Information Act, Brazilian journalist Vinícius Jorge Carneiro Sassine of daily newspaper *O Globo* discovered that state aircrafts prioritized flying public officials over carrying out humanitarian work, such as the transportation of organs for urgent transplants throughout the vast Brazilian territory. When the story was published, authorities changed this practice and gave absolute precedence to the transportation of organs rescuing several lives.



Women in Timor Leste after voting

Photo credit: UN Women Asia and Pacific

## UN on media and elections

During election periods, the UN system's work includes strengthening the capacity of the media to cover electoral activities in a fair, professional and accurate manner by: integrating media and information literacy in voters' education; supporting electoral management bodies and independent media regulators in developing policies ensuring the integrity of the electoral processes; and providing training on the safety of journalists. Also relevant in the context of elections are the UN system's efforts to counter disinformation and misinformation.

## Free and independent media are essential for democracy

Free and independent media, including online media, serve as a watchdog for good governance and democracy. When journalists report abuses of democratic processes, they foster transparency, accountability and the rule of law; and they also enhance the possibility of citizens' participation in public life. Their work is also essential in countries transitioning towards democracy, particularly in times of elections. The right to freedom of expression allows diverse, pluralistic and professional media coverage, necessary for an electorate to make well-informed choices. It is essential that professional and fact-checked news are available and accessible to voters, and not just campaigns run by political parties. To play this fundamental role, the media also relies on the right to access information held by public bodies. Thus, a holistic approach to media freedom is a prerequisite for the integrity of the electoral process.





A boy from Afghanistan browses the local newspaper *Kabul Weekly*, the first independent newspaper appearing in the country following the end of the Taliban regime in Kabul in late 2001.

The rebirth of the *Kabul Weekly* was supported by UNESCO, in partnership with specialized INGOs. International assistance to media also contributed to the development of the first community radio stations, women-run media outlets, and the creation of an Afghan Media and Culture Centre in Kabul.

(Bottom) A Press and Journalists' House was established thanks to the international media assistance in Bangui, in post-conflict Central African Republic, to serve as a resource centre, aimed at building the capacity of local media professionals.



## Free and independent media, peacekeeping and humanitarian crises

In conflict and post-conflict situations, independent and professional media allow journalists to gather and disseminate non-partisan information, to counter direct incitements to violence, and thus to favour reconciliation and democratic transition. Diverse and pluralist media sources, as well as conflict-sensitive reporting, help to expose abuses and human rights violations, and build citizens' defense against disinformation. The free flow of information contributes to peacekeeping and reconciliation processes, for instance by providing citizens with accurate information on peace negotiations or national reconciliation initiatives. Achieving sustainable peace depends upon the respect of international human rights and, in particular, the right to freedom of expression.



### Media development in post-conflict countries

In the past two decades, the UN and UNESCO have been supporting independent media development in conflict and post-conflict situations. Actions in this area range from capacity building to media reconstruction; from the promotion of dialogue among media professionals to providing advice in drafting new media legislation.





*Local radio Diwa, destroyed by the Typhoon Hainan (Yolanda) in Tacloban, Philippines, in 2014.*

Photo credit: Leoniz Morales/Rappler



*UN OCHA supported the "Tacloban Media Survivors Coordination Center" as well as emergency broadcasting to affected communities.*

Photo credits: UNESCO

### **Communication in times of crises**

Communications with Communities (CwC) is an emerging field of humanitarian response that helps to meet the information and communications needs of people affected by crises. Successful early recovery goes together with the rehabilitation of the local media sector capacities. Locally-produced and relevant humanitarian information has a fundamental role, when critical questions require accurate answers on lifesaving information. In times of emergency, information is vital to connect displaced family members, as well as in support of the work of aid agencies. Furthermore, journalism fosters accountability and responsiveness in international relief efforts.

**In conflict and post-conflict/  
post-disaster zones, it is  
necessary to ensure that  
credible and practical  
humanitarian  
information is available both  
to the local population and  
to international assistance  
organizations.**



# Media Under Attack

## An increasingly hostile environment for journalists

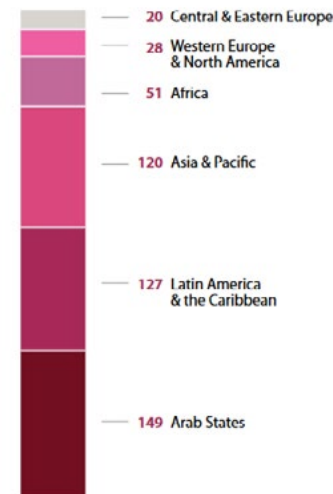
Attacks on journalists, including killings, have increased in the past decade. With two killings per week on average, journalists and media workers are exposed to danger in the pursuit of facts. However, killings only represent a small part of the risks and threats faced daily by journalists, media workers and social media producers. These include, among others: kidnapping, arbitrary detention and surveillance, torture, intimidation and harassment. The [UNESCO World Trends in Freedom of Expression and Media Development – Global Report 2017/2018](#) shows an increase in these other forms of violence towards journalists in recent years. This trend is further exacerbated by increased online harassment and digital surveillance of journalists. There has also been a worldwide surge in attacks against journalists covering protests. Moreover, besides experiencing the same kind of

**PERCENTAGE OF CASES OF KILLINGS OF JOURNALISTS RESOLVED OUT OF ALL CASES CONDEMNED BY UNESCO 2006-2018**



Source: 2019 World Trends Report *In Focus* on Safety of Journalists

**NUMBER OF JOURNALISTS KILLED BY REGION IN 2014-2018**



risks as their male peers, women journalists are also often targeted specifically because of their gender.

With the pervasiveness of social media and the digital disruption of the media industry, old and new propaganda and disinformation messages have become widespread. This has impacted also on citizens' perception and trust vis-à-vis journalists and the media in general. In addition, verbal attacks on the media, including by politicians, may lead to acts of violence against reporters and to a culture of impunity. When a proper prosecution and a trial cannot be ensured for those who attack journalists, this not only stifles media freedom but undermines the rule of law in the country concerned.

**248 JOURNALISTS IMPRISONED**  
ACCORDING TO THE COMMITTEE TO PROTECT JOURNALISTS IN 2019



### NUMBER OF WOMEN JOURNALISTS KILLED WORLDWIDE 2006-2018



Source: UNESCO Observatory of Killed Journalists

## The cycle of violence impacts on democracy and the rule of law

As attacks and threats are on the rise, the climate of impunity prevails. Any attack on any journalist or media worker carried out with the motivation to silence him/her constitutes an attack on the tenets of democracy. Furthermore, impunity for perpetrators of these crimes can lead to self-censorship by the media and has a chilling effect on society, stifling the public expression of opinion and dialogue.

## Safety of journalists covering protests

In recent years, journalists have faced increasing attacks while covering protests, including instances of harassment, arrests and physical violence. Many were intimidated, surveilled, abducted, held incommunicado, humiliated, and suffered equipment damages. Others came under fire, targeted both with lethal and non-lethal weapons. UNESCO's Issue brief *Safety of Journalists Covering Protests – Preserving Freedom of the Press During Times of Civil Unrest*, identified 125 cases of attacks on or arrest of journalists that were covering demonstrations in 65 countries between 1 January 2015 and 30 June 2020, with at least 10 journalists having being killed. In most cases, attacks were perpetrated by police and security forces, while there were also some instances in which they were committed by protestors.

## Gender-specific safety challenges

When carrying out their professional duties, women journalists can be victims to specific dangers, including: sexual assault, online harassment, mob-related sexual violence; or sexual abuse while in captivity. Many of these crimes are not reported, as a result of cultural and professional stigma. While the substantial majority of journalists killed are men, killings of women journalists are increasing.

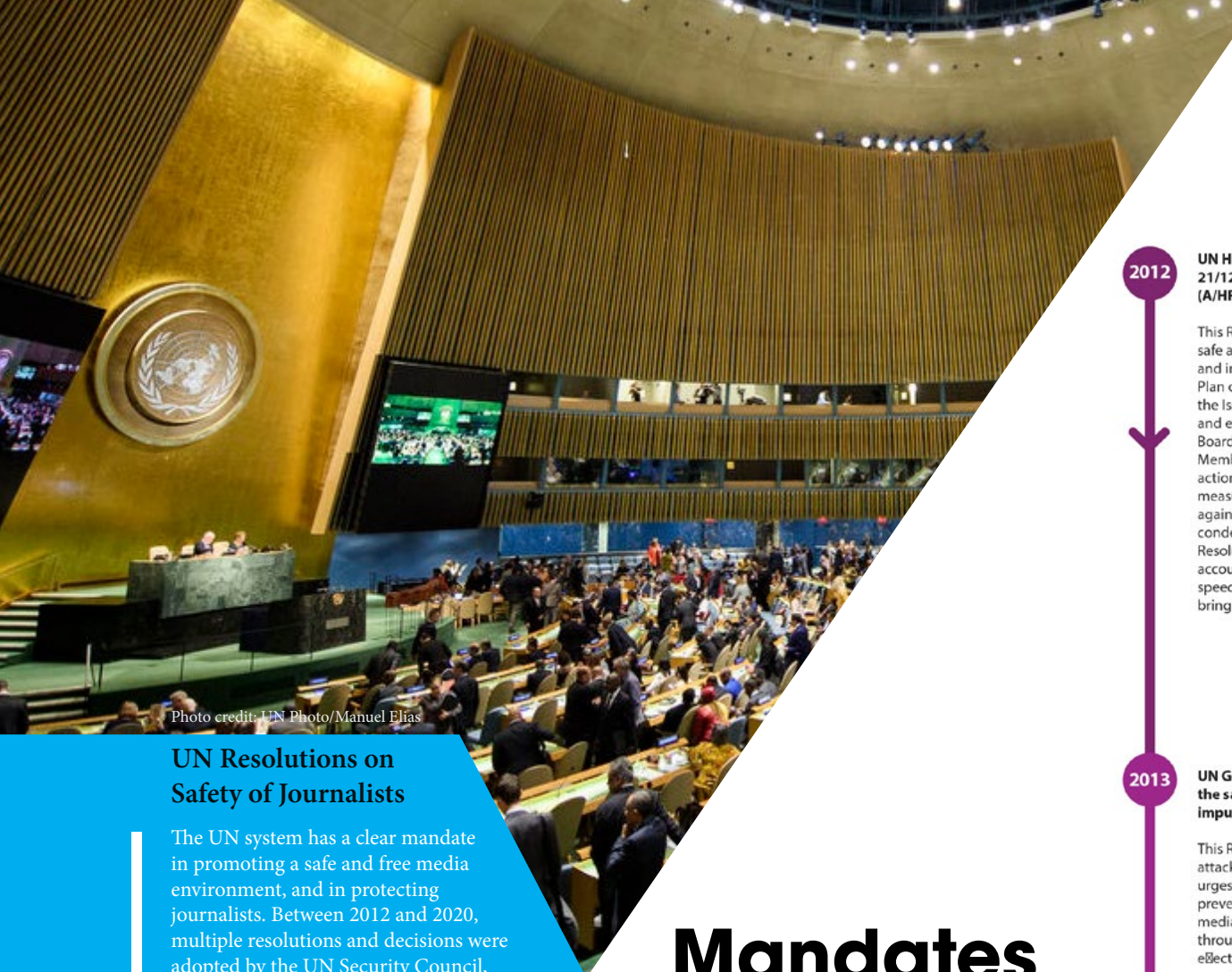


Photo credit: UN Photo/Manuel Elias

## UN Resolutions on Safety of Journalists

The UN system has a clear mandate in promoting a safe and free media environment, and in protecting journalists. Between 2012 and 2020, multiple resolutions and decisions were adopted by the UN Security Council, the General Assembly, and the Human Rights Council; as well as by UNESCO's governing bodies, and its Council of the International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC).

**UN Secretary General's Call to Action for Human Rights** Launched on 24 February 2020, it includes important commitments on freedom of expression and the safety of journalists.

# Mandates

2012

### UN Human Rights Council Resolution 21/12 on the safety of journalists (A/HRC/RES/21/12)

This Resolution calls upon States to promote a safe and enabling environment for journalists and invites further cooperation on the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity, elaborated by UNESCO and endorsed by the UN Chief Executives Board. The Resolution further calls upon Member States to consider a number of actions, such as the introduction of legislative measures, monitoring and reporting violence against journalists, and issuing public condemnations of such attacks. The Resolution also calls upon States to ensure accountability by conducting impartial, speedy and effective investigations and to bring to justice those responsible

2013

### UN General Assembly Resolution 68/163 on the safety of journalists and the issue of impunity (A/RES/68/163)

This Resolution condemns unequivocally all attacks and violence against journalists. It urges Member States to do their utmost to prevent violence against journalists and media workers, to ensure accountability through the conduct of impartial, speedy and effective investigations and to bring the perpetrators of such crimes to justice. The Resolution also proclaims 2 November as the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists.



2014

**UN Human Rights Council Resolution 27/5 on the safety of journalists (A/HRC/RES/27/5)**

This Resolution builds upon and strengthens the Human Rights Council's 2012 Resolution by urging Member States to bring perpetrators of violence against journalists including, *inter alia*, those who command, conspire to commit, aid and abet or cover up such crimes, to justice, and to ensure that victims and their families have access to appropriate remedies. The Resolution calls upon States to implement a number of strategies to counter impunity, such as the formation of special investigative units or independent commissions, the appointment of special prosecutors and the adoption of specific protocols and methods of investigation.

2015

**UN General Assembly Resolution 69/185 on the safety of journalists and the issue of impunity (A/RES/69/185)**

This Resolution condemns unequivocally all attacks and violence against journalists and strongly condemns the prevailing impunity for such attacks. It urges States to do their utmost to prevent violence, threats and attacks against journalists and media workers, to ensure accountability through the conduct of impartial, speedy, thorough, independent and effective investigations into all alleged violence and calls upon States to create and maintain in law and practice an enabling environment for journalists.

**UN Security Council Resolution 2222 (S/Res/2222)**

This Resolution urges all parties involved in armed conflict to respect the professional independence and rights of journalists and media professionals and to take appropriate steps to ensure accountability for crimes committed against journalists working in these situations. The Resolution also affirms that UN peacekeeping operations should report on specific acts of violence against journalists in situation of armed conflict.

**UNESCO 196th Executive Board Decision on the safety of journalists and the issue of impunity (196 EX/31)**

This Decision strongly encourages Member States to actively provide information, on a voluntary basis, concerning the judicial investigations of killings of journalists to UNESCO. It also requests the UNESCO Director-General to report on the implementation of the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity. This includes through strengthening cooperation and information sharing with professional organizations, civil society groups and other actors, facilitating capacity building in Member States and further developing the Gender-Sensitive Indicators for Media and the Journalist Safety Indicators.

**UN General Assembly Resolution 70/162 on the safety of journalists and the issue of impunity (A/RES/70/162)**

This Resolution calls upon States to implement more effectively the applicable legal framework for the protection of journalists and media workers in order to combat prevailing impunity for attacks and violence against journalists. It also stresses the need to ensure better cooperation and coordination at the international and regional levels, including through technical assistance and capacity building, with regard to helping to improve the safety of journalists at the national and local levels.

2016

**UN Human Rights Council Resolution 33/2 on the safety of journalists (A/HRC/RES/33/2)**

This Resolution calls upon States to ensure that measures to combat terrorism and preserve national security or public order do not arbitrarily or unduly hinder the work and safety of journalists. It also calls upon States to protect in law and in practice the confidentiality of journalists' sources. The Resolution emphasizes that in the digital age, encryption and anonymity tools have become vital for many journalists to exercise freely their work and calls upon States not to interfere with the use of such technologies.

2017

**UNESCO 202nd Executive Board Decision on the progress report on safety of journalists and the issue of impunity (202 EX/Decision 5.I.K)**

This Decision takes note with interest a progress report by UNESCO's Secretariat on work on safety of journalists and the issue of impunity and the Multistakeholder Consultation on Strengthening the Implementation of the UN Plan of Action. It requests the Director-General to continue work towards the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 16.10, and monitoring of indicators 16.10.1 and 16.10.2. The Decision encourages Member States to reinforce their efforts in ensuring the voluntary implementation of the UN Plan of Action at national level and strongly urges Member States to provide information on judicial investigations into the killings of journalists. It also calls on Director-General to reinforce activities addressing the specific threats of the safety of women journalists.

**UNESCO 201st Executive Board Decision on the safety of journalists and the issue of impunity (201 EX/Decision 5.I.I)**

In this Decision, UNESCO's Executive Board expresses its commitment to the safety of journalists and media workers. It acknowledges the specific risks faced by women journalists and encourages Member States to develop national prevention, protection and prosecution initiatives. It strongly urges Member States to continue to provide voluntary responses concerning the judicial investigations of the killing of journalists and to develop effective monitoring mechanisms for this purpose.

**UN General Assembly Resolution 72/175 on the safety of journalists and the issue of impunity (A/RES/72/175)**

This Resolution condemns unequivocally all attacks and violence against journalists and media workers. It also condemns specific attacks on women journalists in the exercise of their work, including sexual and gender-based discrimination and violence, intimidation and harassment, online and offline. The Resolution calls upon States to implement more effectively the applicable legal framework for the protection of journalists and media workers in order to combat impunity. It also recognizes the decision of the Secretary-General to mobilize a network of focal points throughout the United Nations system to intensify efforts to enhance the safety of journalists and media workers.

**UNESCO 39th General Conference Resolution on strengthening UNESCO's leadership in the implementation of the UN Plan of Action on Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity (39 C/Resolution 39)**

This Resolution welcomes UNESCO's efforts towards the formalisation of a system of focal points for the safety of journalists within the relevant United Nations entities. It also encourages Member States to strengthen the voluntary implementation of the UN Plan of Action at country level and invites the UNESCO Director-General to reinforce actions addressing threats to the safety of women journalists online and offline.

**UN Human Rights Council Resolution on the promotion, protection and enjoyment of human rights on the Internet (A/HRC/RES/38/7)**

This Resolution emphasizes the risks with regard to the safety of journalists in the digital age, including the particular vulnerability of journalists to becoming targets of unlawful or arbitrary surveillance and/or interception of communications, in violation of their rights to privacy and to freedom of expression. It also condemns unequivocally online attacks against women, including sexual and gender-based violence and abuse of women, and calls for gender-sensitive responses that take into account the particular forms of online discrimination. It additionally calls upon States to create and maintain, in law and in practice, a safe and enabling online environment so that journalists may perform their work independently and without undue or unlawful interference, including by allowing them to secure their communications and to protect their sources.

**UN Human Rights Council Resolution 39/6 on the safety of journalists (A/HRC/RES/39/6)**

This Resolution condemns unequivocally all attacks and violence against journalists and media workers and expresses grave concern that the vast majority of these crimes go unpunished. It also calls upon States to strengthen national data collection, analysis and reporting on the number of verified cases of killings other harmful acts against journalists and associated media personnel, in accordance with Sustainable Development Goal indicator 16.10.1.

The Resolution calls upon States to tackle gender-based discrimination, including sexual and gender-based violence, threats, intimidation, harassment and incitement to hatred against women journalists, online and offline. It also urges States to put in place safe gender-sensitive preventive measures and investigative procedures in order to encourage women journalists to report attacks against them, and to provide adequate support, including psychosocial support, to victims and survivors.

2019

**UNESCO 206th Executive Board Decision on the safety of journalists and the issue of impunity (206 EX/Decision 5.I.B)**

In this Decision, UNESCO's Executive Board strongly urges Member States to continue to provide on a voluntary basis information on judicial investigations into these killings in response to the Director-General's requests. It further encourages States to continue to ensure the voluntary implementation of the United Nations Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity at the national level, inter alia through the development of national information, prevention, protection and prosecution systems, as well as reporting on Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) indicator 16.10.1. It also invites the Director-General to prioritize activities addressing the specific threats to the safety of women journalists, both online and offline.

**UN General Assembly Resolution 74/157 on the safety of journalists and the issue of impunity (A/RES/74/157)**

This Resolution recognizes the important role of journalism for sustainable development and democratic societies; condemns attacks against journalists and impunity for crimes against journalists; and "calls upon States to create and maintain, in law and in practice, a safe and enabling environment for journalists to perform their work independently and without undue interference, taking into account the gender dimensions." Additionally, the Resolution requests Member States to provide, on a voluntary basis, information to UNESCO within the framework of the annual request regarding information on judicial follow-up on killings.

2020

**The Highest Aspiration. A Call to Action for Human Rights.**

Launched by the UN Secretary-General at the Opening of the 43rd regular session of the Human Rights Council and to mark the 75th anniversary of the UN (for details, see page 15 of this Resource Kit).

**UN Human Rights Council Resolution 45/18 on the safety of journalists (A/HRC/RES/45/18)**

This Resolution addresses new issues such as extraterritorial threats, overbroad and vague laws, strategic lawsuits against public participation, accreditation regimes, access to information, surveillance and protests, while strengthening language on gender-specific threats against journalists.

**UN Human Rights Council Resolution 44/12 on freedom of opinion and expression (A/HRC/RES/44/12)**

This Resolution calls on all States to take active measures to protect the safety of journalists, media workers and human rights defenders so that they can practice their right to freedom of expression.





## A shrinking civic space, including due to threats to freedom of expression

The Call to Action recognizes that civic space and possibilities for public participation are shrinking in many countries. It brings attention to laws and policies that curb freedom of expression, the use of new technologies to control civil society and undermine media freedom, and the heightened threats faced by journalists, human rights defenders, and especially women. It proposes actions to enhance civil society participation in the UN system, and to protect civic space and different stakeholders' expression of their views. It encourages partnerships between RCs, UNCTs, Heads of UN peace operations and CSOs to strengthen an enabling environment for civic space. It also commits to enhance UN support to legislation and policies protecting a free and independent media.

Read [the Call to Action here](#)

Building on the Secretary-General's Call to Action, a [UN Guidance Note on Protection and Promotion of Civic Space](#) was adopted in September 2020. It focuses on "3 Ps": Participation, Protection and Promotion, featuring recommendations of specific relevance to journalists' safety and freedom of expression.

# The UN Secretary-General's Call to Action for Human Rights

## Strengthening UN leadership to advance human rights and respond to current challenges

The Secretary-General released this Call to Action to promote a transformative, impactful human rights vision. The Call states that human rights are the responsibility of every UN actor; with the role of UN leaders in the field, including Heads of Mission and Resident Coordinators, being particularly important. A human rights risk and opportunity analysis that integrates a gender-specific dimension should inform mandate implementation and engagement by RCs and UNCTs, it notes. It also calls for capacities and expertise on human rights to be provided to Special Representatives of the Secretary-General, and for an expanded presence of Human Rights Advisers to UNCTs.





# Sustainable Development Goal 16

## Indicator 16.10.1

Under the 2030 Agenda, SDG 16 promotes peaceful and inclusive societies with access to justice for all and with accountable institutions at all levels. More specifically, target 16.10 is to “ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements,” while the indicator 16.10.1 monitors attacks against journalists.

**Indicator 16.10.1 :**  
“Number of verified cases of killing, kidnapping, enforced disappearance, arbitrary detention and torture of journalists,

### Voluntary National Reviews

Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) are a key element within the follow-up and review framework of the 2030 Agenda, and allow Member States to highlight their achievements, lessons learned and challenges faced while implementing it. These voluntary, state-led and multi-stakeholder reviews assess progress at national and sub-national levels. Member States are encouraged to conduct them regularly, and to present them to the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), which meets annually under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council. The VNRs are expected to feed into the HLPF’s regular reviews.

Examples, from 2019 VNRs: Iceland reasserted its commitment to tackle issues related to the infringement of journalists’ freedom of expression that have been the subject of judgements by the European Court of Human Rights. Indonesia referred to the need to address instances of physical and non-physical violence against journalists perpetrated by certain groups. Iraq reported on the killings of journalists that took place between 2015 and 2017, the establishment of the Iraqi National Committee for the Protection of Journalists and the Fight against Impunity, and a Special Investigation Unit set up at the Ministry of Interior to follow-up on cases involving the violation of journalists’ rights.





Photo credit: Cyril Ndegeya

# The UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity

Initiated in 2012, [the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity](#) (UN Plan of Action) is a UN-wide plan to promote the safety of journalists and tackle the widespread impunity for crimes committed against them. It was developed by UNESCO, in close collaboration with a wide range of stakeholders, including Member States, other UN agencies, NGOs, academia, as well as media representatives and practitioners. The UN Plan of Action was first endorsed by the UN Chief Executives Board (CEB) in 2012, and then subjected to a global multi-stakeholder review in 2017, organized by UNESCO and OHCHR. More than a hundred specialized NGOs and representatives from the media community as well as Member States participated in this review. Numerous concrete suggestions were put forward to strengthen its implementation and impact.

Read more in [the Outcome document](#)

## Leading UN agencies

As the UN agency with a specific mandate to promote freedom of expression and media freedom, UNESCO leads the coordination and implementation of the UN Plan of Action. To achieve this, UNESCO works in close cooperation with OHCHR and the Executive Office of the UN Secretary-General (EOSG), and other relevant UN agencies. The UN Plan of Action puts emphasis on the “3 P-approach”: Prevention, Protection and Prosecution.

## Stay updated.

Visit <https://en.unesco.org/themes/fostering-freedom-expression> and subscribe to UNESCO's Newsletter about the implementation of the UN Plan of Action



## International Day to End Impunity for Crimes Against Journalists

In 2013, the UN General Assembly proclaimed 2 November as the 'International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists' (IDEI). This date was chosen in commemoration of the assassination of two French journalists in Mali on 2 November 2013.

The UN Plan of Action envisions cooperation and practical actions with all relevant stakeholders in

### Six key areas:

#### Area 1 Raising Awareness

- Sensitizing the public as well as key stakeholders and partners on the societal importance of independent and professional journalism is crucial towards the achievement of the UN Plan of Action. International UN Days such as [World Press Freedom Day](#) (3 May) and the [International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists](#) (2 November) highlight on an international as well as local stage the importance of promoting the safety of journalists and tackling impunity.

#### World Press Freedom Day

Proclaimed by the UN General Assembly in December 1993, following the recommendation of UNESCO's General Conference, 3 May, is celebrated worldwide as World Press Freedom Day (WPFJ). It is also the anniversary of the Declaration of Windhoek on Promoting an Independent and Pluralistic African Press. WPFJ is an opportunity to:

- Celebrate the fundamental principles of press freedom;
- Assess the state of press freedom throughout the world;
- Pay tribute to journalists who have lost their lives in the line of duty.

#### UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize

Launched in 1997, the [annual UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize](#) honours a person, organization or institution that has made an outstanding contribution to the defence and/or promotion of press freedom anywhere in the world, especially when this contribution has been achieved in the face of danger.

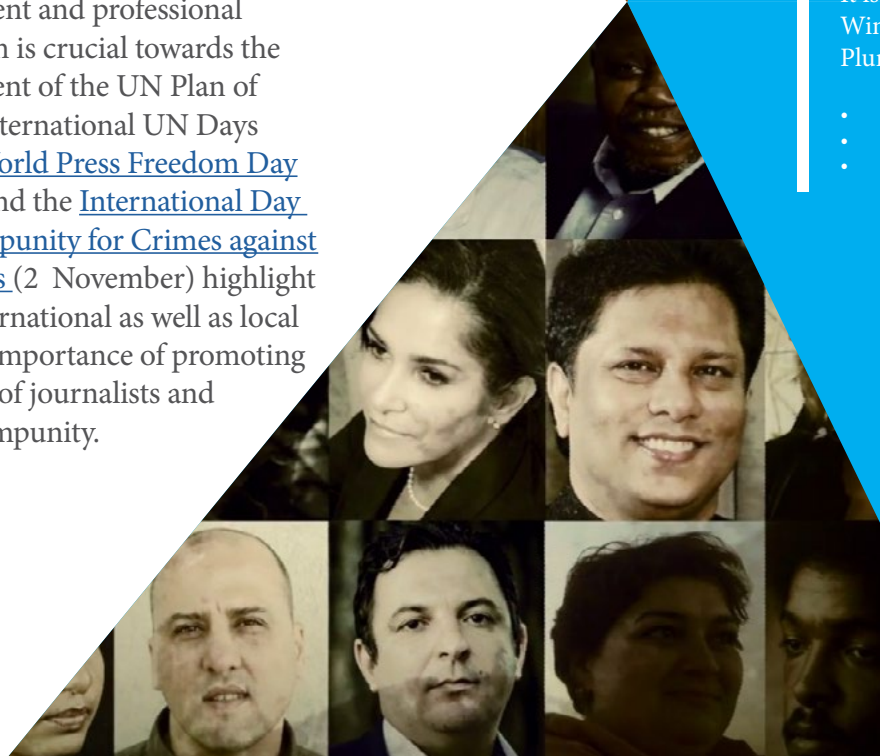






Photo credit: Farah Warsame

## National Safety Mechanisms

At least 30 countries have created or strengthened national mechanisms for the protection of, prevention against, and prosecution of attacks against journalists. Among these countries are Afghanistan, Colombia, Iraq, Italy, Mexico, Pakistan, Philippines, Somalia, Sweden and Tunisia. Many of these mechanisms are multi-stakeholder in nature, bringing together government representatives, civil society, law enforcement actors and media organizations.

In 2018, the African Union created the ‘Working Group on the Safety of Journalists’, whose mission includes promoting the establishment of such mechanisms in selected AU countries.

## Area 2 Standard Setting and Policymaking

Global standard setting provides a baseline upon which regional and national policies can be founded. Over the past decade, there has been a growing recognition at regional and national levels of the importance of ensuring the safety of journalists. Landmark resolutions by the UN have inspired other governmental, regional and national bodies to unequivocally condemn all attacks against media workers as well as to take steps to establish mechanisms tasked to protect the right to freedom of expression. In addition, these resolutions called upon national governments to implement measures to guarantee the safety of journalists.



## UNESCO observatory of killed journalists

Browse by Country

- Choose -

1424 journalists killed since 1993



### Area 3 Monitoring and Reporting

Research and data on the state of press freedom and the safety of journalists worldwide is crucial to ensure positive and sustainable change. Multiple publications and reports by the UN and specialized international organizations provide much needed background information to orient and frame development efforts.

These include reports by the:

- [UN Secretary-General](#)
- [UNESCO Director-General](#)
- [UN High Commissioner on Human Rights](#)
- [Human Rights Council's special procedures mandate holders](#)
- [UNESCO World Trends on Freedom of Expression and Media Development](#)
- [Universal Periodic Reviews](#)

Furthermore, the reporting on SDG indicator 16.10.1 provides official data on attacks against media workers (See page 16).

### Monitoring at the global level

The [UNESCO Observatory on Killed Journalists](#) is an online database providing information on each killing of a journalist or media worker recorded by UNESCO since 1993. It allows anyone to obtain information on the circumstances of the killings, with search options based on nationality, country of killing, name, sex, media type, and employment status.

The database also provides information about the status of judicial inquiries and, in many cases, includes documents provided by Member States on the status of the judicial proceedings.

Country profiles allow insights into levels of impunity per country.

### Monitoring at national level

In Tunisia, a monitoring mechanism to track attacks against journalists was launched in March 2017. Coordinated by the National Union of Tunisian Journalists (SNJT), the “Monitoring and Documentation Unit on Attacks against Journalists” is supported by UNESCO and the Tunisian Office of OHCHR.

The number of Member States whose Voluntary National Reviews feature information specifically pertaining to journalists' safety remains small, which highlights the importance of further support in this area. In this regard, besides contributing to a guide on SDG 16 reporting produced by UNDP, UNESCO has for example accompanied the VNR process in Iraq by organizing, jointly with local and international partners, a consultation on the country's 2019 VNR in relation to SDGs indicators 16.10.1 & 2.





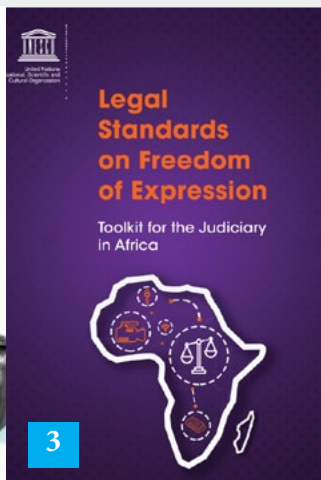
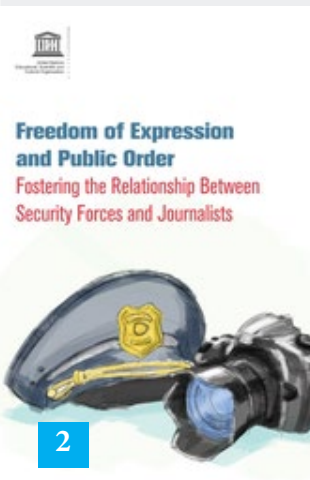
# Marco Jurídico Internacional sobre Libertad de Expresión, Acceso a la Información Pública y Protección de Periodistas

4 de abril al 15 de mayo

Las inscripciones estarán abiertas del 15 de febrero al 25 de marzo de 2016

Organiza

Apoya



## Area 4 Capacity Building

In implementing the UN Plan of Action on the ground, change is brought about through building the capacities of local actors, including journalists, security forces, and the judiciary. Capacity building efforts also involve assisting national governments in developing and enacting legal frameworks favourable to freedom of expression and freedom of information.

For example, UNESCO has signed Memorandums of Understanding with the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights, the ECOWAS Court of Justice, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights and the Ibero-American Judicial Summit, to strengthen the capacities of judicial actors on international and regional standards and policies related to freedom of expression, access to information, safety of journalists and ending impunity for crimes committed against them.

### Captions:

1. To date, almost 7,000 judicial operators and 3,400 security forces have been trained through online courses on the safety of journalists and freedom of expression, in 60 countries throughout Latin America and the Caribbean and Africa.
2. [UNESCO manual for training security forces.](#)
3. [Toolkit for African judges on legal standards for freedom of expression](#) used to train over 3,000 judicial operators in Africa.
4. [Toolkit for Latin American judges on legal standards for freedom of expression.](#)



## Research in the field of women journalists' safety

The digital era has created new opportunities for women journalists, but has also provided a platform for new forms of attacks.

These attacks include online harassment, cyberstalking, invasion of privacy, defamation campaigns, rape threats, trolling, hacking, abuse through the use of email, websites, social media, and social messaging. As observes the UNESCO 2019 [In Focus report on the Safety of Journalists](#), existing research shows that women journalists more frequently become the target of online violence than their male colleagues. The digital harassment and abuse women journalists face also tend to be more vicious, and their nature is also often different, involving sexual or sexist language and referring for instance to their physical features, personal life or cultural background, rather than being based on aspects of their work. Recently, UNESCO has launched a global study on measures tackling online harassment of women journalists, which will analyze good practices from across regions and develop recommendations for all concerned stakeholders.

## Research Agenda on the Safety of Journalists

UNESCO encourages new academic research on the issue of women journalists' safety within the framework of its "Research Agenda on the Safety of Journalists", launched in 2015. This initiative was strengthened by the creation of a "Journalism Safety Research Network" by the Centre for Freedom of the Media (CFOM) of the University of Sheffield to encourage research projects.



## Area 5 Research

In addition to monitoring and reporting, issues related to the safety of journalists require academic inquiry where solutions and proposals can be identified. Since 2016, UNESCO has organized an annual academic conference on the safety of journalists, and actively promoted further research in this area. UNESCO also promotes research using its Journalists' Safety Indicators.

## VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT AGAINST WOMEN IN THE NEWS MEDIA: A GLOBAL PICTURE

*In 2015, UNESCO supported the International News Safety Institute (INSI) and the International Women's Media Foundation (IWMF) to carry out a global survey among female journalists.*



Photo credit: INSI, IWMF



## Global and national coalitions

At global level, a group of more than 30 INGOs have created the “CSO Coalition on Safety of Journalists” to coordinate the implementation of the UN Plan of Action. It is a periodical and informal network, gathering the participation of three types of CSOs:

- Press freedom monitoring and advocacy organizations;
- Media development organizations, which manage long-term programmes to build local safety mechanisms;
- Organizations that are representative and/or membership-based from the journalism and media industry, which often undertake a mixture of monitoring, advocacy and safety activities.

Member States have created the “Group of Friends for the Safety of Journalists” at the UN in New York and Geneva at UNESCO and at the OSCE in Vienna. Moreover, a Media Freedom Coalition of like-minded countries emerged from the London Conference on Media Freedom held in July 2019, in the framework of the Campaign for Media Freedom initiated by the United Kingdom and Canada. As of October 2020, 37 countries are members of this coalition.

## Regional and sub-regional coalitions in Africa

An interregional forum held at the UN Economic Commission of Africa (Addis Ababa, 26-27 November 2018) under the theme “Strengthening National Monitoring and Reporting Mechanisms for the Safety of Journalists in Africa in the realisation of Agenda 2063 Aspiration 3 and Agenda 2030 SDG 16.10.1”, established an African coordination mechanism on safety of journalists.

Among other recommendations, it was agreed that national mechanisms should strive to engage all three arms of government, including security forces and the judiciary; civil society actors; bodies representing journalists, media workers and media outlets; lawyers’ associations and human rights defenders; journalism training and research institutions; media regulatory bodies; INGOs; and relevant inter-governmental organizations, including UN agencies and other representatives of the international community.



## Area 6 Coalition Building

A single actor cannot individually tackle the multifaceted challenges involved in creating a safe environment for journalists. Thus, the UN joined forces with media, NGOs, academia and governments to develop the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity. This coalition-based mechanism requires collaboration and partnerships at all levels to ensure the safety of journalists and media workers worldwide, which includes the sharing of information in order to foster dialogue between different stakeholders and complementarity among their actions.

In more than 30 countries, the UN Plan of Action is implemented in collaboration with the UN Country Teams (UNCTs), often as part of the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF), and with the support of CSOs.



Participants at the Interregional Forum held at the ECA in Addis Ababa.

# Technical Guidance

## UN Focal Points Network on the Safety of Journalists

Following requests by civil society in light of increasing attacks against journalists, the UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, reestablished an enhanced network of focal points on safety of journalists (hereafter known as the UN Focal Points Network), as per a recommendation of the UN Plan of Action. As of December 2017, the UN Focal Points Network is comprised of focal points from 14 UN agencies and Departments: UNESCO; UNHCR; UN/DPKO and UN/DPA (now UN/DPPA); DPI/DGC; UN/DOCO OCHA; UNODC; UNDP; UNHCR; UN Women; ILO; WHO; WFP. The Network is co-chaired by UNESCO and OHCHR, in consultation with the EOSG.

Furthermore, in 2017 the UN Secretary-General designated Ana Maria Menéndez, USG Senior Advisor on Policy, as the contact point on safety of journalists within the EOSG. The focal points in each agency should be in a position to promote the work in the field of safety of journalists within their organizations, as well as to advise colleagues both at their headquarters and in field offices. While the Network is represented at the HQ level, agencies are encouraged to create, when appropriate and necessary, similar coordination mechanisms within regional hubs and UNCTs, being the global network ready to backstop these local UN arrangements.





## REGIONAL COOPERATION

The main task of the UN Focal Points Network is to strengthen the specific contribution of each relevant UN actor with regards to the safety of journalists and the achievement of the UN Plan of Action. It acts as a catalyst to:

### **I. Increase awareness throughout the UN system and beyond**

- a. At all levels, including the UN senior leadership level in Member States (incl. UNCT meetings and UNSDCF workshops).
- b. Via all possible avenues, including retreats of senior staff and the UN Chief Executives Board.

### **II. Strengthen inter-UN collaboration as well as cooperation with other stakeholders**

- a. Within the UN-system: frequent sharing of information, and regular UN Focal Points Network meetings.
- b. Explore and develop possible partnerships with relevant regional organizations and civil society actors, whilst strengthening those already in place.

### **III. Harmonise the “UN voice” in the “One UN” spirit: Enable informed and coordinated responses to urgent cases of media workers**

- a. Development and usage of joint messaging and rapid response mechanisms, in conjunction with civil society partners, and in support of the work of the UN Special Rapporteur on the Freedom of Opinion and Expression as well as other Human Rights Council’s special procedures mandate holders where relevant.

### **IV. Promote as well as employ a gender-sensitive approach and analysis in all activities and undertakings**





## UN Focal Points Network's Work

The work of the UN Network of Focal Points on Safety of Journalists is divided into outputs at the global, regional and national levels. The work also includes visibility, outreach and communication actions.

## Global Level

The UN Focal Points Network's work envisions, at the global level, the need to deepen global inter-agency collaboration and coordination among UN entities on safety of journalists and the implementation of the UN Plan of Action. In practical terms, this requires, inter alia;

- **Information sharing and regular UN Focal Points Network meetings to enable informed and coordinated responses on any relevant issues related to the safety of journalists.**
  - a. Sharing of briefings, official correspondences, and the bi-monthly UN Plan of Action newsletter.
  - b. Contributing to other UN agencies' reports.
  - c. Sharing of good practices as well as materials to be used by the different focal points.
  - d. Support in the monitoring and development of SDG target 16.10.
- **Advise the Executive Office of the UN Secretary-General on individual cases of violations of the right to freedom of expression, including when, and if necessary, to act jointly in pursuing an established procedure.**
- **Coordination of the global commemorations of the 'International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists' (IDEI) and 'World Press Freedom Day' (WPF).**
- **Promote a gender-sensitive and gender-responsive approach on the safety of journalists.**
  - a. Mainstreaming a gender-sensitive approach in all activities and undertakings.
  - b. Specific advocacy, research, monitoring as well as capacity building related to the safety of women journalists.



Members of the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights signed a memorandum of understanding with UNESCO, formalizing a cooperation to promote press freedom.

## Regional level

The UN Focal Points Network's work envisions the need to establish or strengthen inter-agency coordination on safety of journalists and joint outreach to relevant regional organizations at regional levels. In practical terms, this requires, inter alia:

- **Advocacy at the level of UN regional hubs**
  - a. Sharing the UN Plan of Action with UN regional offices.
  - b. Assisting/facilitating in-country joint visits by relevant OHCHR's Special Rapporteurs and their regional counterparts.
  
- **Linking up to regional organizations and regional multilateral bodies and exploring avenues for developing partnerships**
  - a. Regional UNESCO and OHCHR offices to liaise with relevant regional rapporteurs, human rights courts and bodies, organizations and conferences, and UN regional commissions.
  - b. Organization of joint regional activities and events.

## Cooperation with Regional Bodies

The UN cooperates with relevant regional bodies and special procedures, such as the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and its Representative on Freedom of the Media, the Council of Europe, the Organization of American States (OAS) and its Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression, and the African Commission on Human and People's Rights (ACHPR) and its Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information.



Joint session of Special Rapporteurs during the 2018 global conference of World Press Freedom Day in Accra, Ghana.



# Safety of Journalists in the Field:

## Inter-agency coordination

While actions at global and regional levels are indispensable for promoting safety of journalists, the UN should primarily impact policies at national levels. The UN Focal Points Network's work envisions at national levels, the need to establish or strengthen interagency coordination on safety of journalists at UNCT level and joint outreach to relevant national stakeholders. In practical terms, this requires, inter alia:

- **Promotion of the UN Plan of Action at national level:**
  - a. UNESCO and OHCHR field offices.
  - b. UNCT's Human Rights Officers.
  - c. Human Rights Results Groups and Theme Groups.
  - d. Dissemination of relevant materials on rights-based responses regarding the safety of journalists.
  - e. Integration of the UN Plan of Action elements into DPKO and DPA missions.

## Assessments based on internationally-endorsed indicators

Developed within the context of the UN Plan of Action, the **Journalists' Safety Indicators** have been applied in several countries across all regions and are feeding into the process to monitor the implementation of SDG 16. Together with the assessments based on **Media Development Indicators**, these analyses offer factual-based recommendations to integrate the promotion of the safety of journalists within the work of the UNCT, as well as in UNSDCF's and other joint programming documents. Importantly, they can help increase support, at field level, for laws and policies defending the right of equal participation and civic space by protecting free and independent media, as encouraged by the UN Secretary-General's recent Call to Action for Human Rights. These sets of indicators have been validated by the UNESCO/IPDC Intergovernmental Council.

## Gender Sensitive Indicators

The "**Gender-Sensitive Indicators for Media**" are a framework to gauge gender sensitivity in media operations and content.





### Lydia Cacho

Amnesty International describes Ms Cacho, who was born in Mexico City in 1963, as “perhaps Mexico’s most famous investigative journalist and women’s rights advocate.” Her reporting focuses on violence and sexual abuse against women and children. She is the recipient of a number of international prizes, including the 2008 UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize.



- Assist relevant UNCTs on the ground in dealing with individual cases of violations of the right to freedom of expression, including attacks against journalists. The options vary from engagement to quiet diplomacy, from advocacy to public action.
- Identify priorities for in-country actions
  - a. Mapping of where the UN Plan of Action is under way, including when upscaling is needed.
  - b. Constant monitoring of the national situation.

## Mexico: A Decision recognizing the violation of human rights

Lydia María Cacho Ribeiro was a victim of police harassment and a target of repeated death threats and attacks because of her investigative work. In 2014, and represented by ARTICLE 19 Mexico, she filed a complaint to the UN Human Rights Committee. In July 2018, the Committee issued a decision recognizing that the Mexican State had violated different human rights after she was arbitrarily detained in 2005. These included gender equality, prohibition of torture, personal freedom and security, and freedom of expression, among others. In January 2019, the Mexican State issued an apology to Ms. Cacho for her arbitrary detention and the use of torture “as an instrument of investigation, intimidation and punishment” by state agents. The Mexican State also committed to investigating crimes against press freedom, providing reparations and implementing measures to guarantee non-repetition.

### Implementation of the UN Plan of Action in the country

With the highest rate of journalists killed in its region, Mexico faces key challenges that have been highlighted by the UN and the OAS Special Rapporteurs for freedom of expression, international organizations and civil society organizations. The UN Plan of Action is implemented by “Coalición Espacio OSC”, a partnership comprised of both international organizations and national CSOs. The UN’s work in the field of safety of journalists is spearheaded by the UNIC, the OHCHR and UNESCO offices in Mexico City.

During the commemoration of the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes Against Journalists held in Mexico City on 7 November 2019, the Mexican Government underlined its commitment to take into account the 104 recommendations of an independent assessment by the OHCHR, to strengthen the national protection mechanism for human rights defenders and journalists. It also announced that it would establish an investigative journalism fund (to be managed independently by UNESCO) and a social security programme for freelance journalists, commitments that were later reflected in a letter of intent signed with UNESCO in February 2020.



## Nepal: Tackling a sudden (and temporary) regression on press freedom

In 2005, King Gyanendra of Nepal rejected the country's constitutional democracy and reestablished an absolute monarchy, achieved by repressing the vibrant media sector. In Spring 2006, a democracy movement emerged, which included the participation of journalists and the network of community media. King Gyanendra was forced to reinstate the House of Representatives, and he resigned in 2008. A peace agreement was reached after decades of civil war, and elections were held to elect a Constituent Assembly in 2018. As these developments were unfolding, UNESCO and the OHCHR took action for the protection of press freedom: In April 2006, UNESCO's former Director-General, Koïchiro Matsuura, expressed deep concern over the attacks and arrests targeting journalists and publishers that were led by the Nepalese Army and the Armed Police Forces. He also brought attention to the critical conditions that had been reported by the International Press Freedom and Freedom of Expression Mission to Nepal, in which UNESCO took an active part. That same month, the OHCHR Nepal expressed concern regarding the arrest and detention of prominent journalists and civil society leaders during peaceful demonstrations. In May 2008, the Representative of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights highlighted the need for the then newly elected Constituent Assembly.

## Iraq: Supporting the Ministry of Interior in providing protection for media institutions

In October 2019, during a wave of protests in Baghdad, the Iraqi national monitoring mechanism of attacks against journalists, supported by UNESCO, confirmed 26 attacks on journalists, 14 cases of media workers impeded from covering protests, and four TV stations offices raided by unidentified armed groups. Following the attacks, the UNESCO Office for Iraq was invited by the Iraqi Minister of Interior to attend a special meeting with media managers and the Iraqi Journalists Syndicate. During the meeting, participants expressed deep concern about these attacks. The Minister declared his readiness to deploy special protection by dispatching security forces to any media at risk. He also invited all media under threat to liaise with the Iraqi National Committee for the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity, or to contact a dedicated hotline. The Minister also deployed a Special Investigative Unit to conduct investigations into these attacks. In Iraq, UNESCO has been spearheading the implementation of the UN Plan of Action in cooperation with the UNCT, the Iraqi authorities, media representatives, as well as national and international specialized NGOs.

## Afghanistan: Journalists' Safety Committee

Since the 2002 transition process, Afghanistan has successfully developed a vibrant and professional media sector. Recently, however, journalists' safety has seen a number of setbacks, after 11 journalists were killed in early May 2018. UNESCO's Director-General, Audrey Azoulay, condemned the attacks and called for those responsible to be brought to justice. The UNESCO Office in Kabul and local partners, such as the Afghanistan Journalists Safety Committee, have been working with the Afghan authorities (including the Ministries of the Interior, Defence, Foreign Affairs, the National Security Council and the Attorney General's Office) on a monitoring and reporting mechanism in connection to the UNESCO Director-General's annual enquiry to Member States regarding the judicial follow-up to the killings of journalists.



MULTI-STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION  
STRENGTHENING THE  
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE  
**UN PLAN OF ACTION  
ON THE SAFETY OF  
JOURNALISTS  
AND THE ISSUE OF  
IMPUNITY**

- Assist the UNCTs and relevant national stakeholders in the implementation of the UN Plan of Action
  - a. Based on UNESCO/IPDC's Media Development Indicators as well as on the Journalists' Safety Indicators and other international tools.
  - b. Implementation of the ILO's Occupational Safety and Health Convention, as it also concerns media professionals.

- Coordination of the national commemorations for the 'International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists' (IDEI) and 'World Press Freedom Day' (WPFJ)
  - a. In addition to the global commemoration and conference, multiple national events are organized annually.

Global commemorations of the [World Press Freedom Day](#) and of the [International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists](#)



### Global call in Geneva to improve the safety of journalists on the ground

Action-oriented recommendations to improve the protection of journalists and reinforce the implementation of the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity were identified by key stakeholders at a [meeting organized by UNESCO and the OHCHR in Geneva in June 2017](#). The recommendations were formulated in consultation with representatives of UN agencies, Member States, regional intergovernmental organizations, civil society, media, internet intermediaries and academia.





**EACH YEAR,  
ONE JOURNALIST  
GETS  
A PULITZER** *Each year, journalists  
are killed to be silenced.  
Now, you can become  
their voice.*

**AND ONE  
HUNDRED  
GET SHOT.**

#TruthNeverDies



## #TruthNeverDies

In 2018, the commemoration of the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists was marked by the #TruthNeverDies campaign, which was widely shared across the UN's social media accounts and beyond.

# Mainstreaming the Safety of Journalists in UN Communications

The UN Focal Points Network's work requires the development of outreach, visibility and communication actions concerning the issue of safety of journalists. This Resource Kit is a useful starting point for such development.

These actions could include, inter alia:

- **Public awareness and advocacy on the safety of journalists**
  - a. Press releases via traditional media as well as social media campaigns.
  - b. Dissemination through various networks.
- **Inter-agency internal information sharing**

The Prime Minister of Sudan, Abdalla Hamdok, the UNESCO Director-General Ms Audrey Azoulay, and the UK Special Envoy for Media Freedom Ms Amal Clooney participated in the launch of the Media Freedom Coalition at the 74th UNGA in New York on 27th September 2019



## “Press Behind Bars” at the UN Headquarters in New York

During the UN General Assembly in 2018, the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) organized the panel “Press Behind Bars” to talk about imprisoned journalists around the world. Among the speakers were barrister Amal Clooney, CPJ's Executive Director, Joel Simon, and Reuters' President, Stephen Adler. Adler and Clooney focused on the case of Reuters' reporters Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo, who were convicted under Myanmar's Official Secrets Act and sentenced to seven years of hard labor, and then imprisoned. Simon spoke about the cases of photojournalist Shahidul Alam, imprisoned in Bangladesh; journalist and human rights defender, Azimjon Askarov, imprisoned in Kyrgyzstan; and blogger Alaa Abdelfattah and photojournalist Mahmoud Abou Zeid (Shawkan), formerly imprisoned in Egypt.



Photo credit: Cengiz Yar

## The UN and the Safety of Women Journalists

The UN Secretary-General's report (A/72/29) on the safety of journalists and the issue of impunity elaborates on an acknowledgement made by the General Assembly, in resolution 70/162, of the specific risks faced by women journalists in the exercise of their work and the importance of taking a gender-sensitive approach when considering measures to address the safety of journalists. The report notes that there has been an increase in violence, threats and harassment against women journalists; and it provides an account of initiatives undertaken by relevant actors in this area. These efforts have been aimed at increasing the attention paid to the safety of women journalists through resolutions, recommendations, national laws, policies and programmes, and protection and accountability mechanisms, together with awareness raising and training activities.

### **#JournalistsToo: stopping online harassment of women journalists**

On 18 June 2019, UNESCO and members of the Group of Friends for the Safety of Journalists at UNESCO organized the conference "Standing Up against Online Harassment of Women Journalists – What works?". It was an opportunity to raise awareness of the specific threats faced by women journalists, including online sexual harassment and violence, while also exploring practical and legal measures to combat them. The event brought together over 200 Member States' representatives, journalists and legal professionals to explore new ways to reinforce the safety of women journalists. A social media campaign was launched by using the hashtags #JournalistsToo and #JournoSafe. Austria, which chairs the UNESCO Group of Friends, disseminated the summary of the conference to all its missions abroad and encouraged the other members of the Group to disseminate it as widely as possible.

**STOP**  
**ONLINE HARASSMENT**  
**OF WOMEN JOURNALISTS**  
**#JOURNALISTSTOO**



# Partners

The safety of journalists and the issue of impunity cannot be addressed singlehandedly. The UN is not alone in addressing the current hostile climate towards the media. All efforts are in coordination and cooperation with numerous partners and stakeholders, including:

## I. Regional Human Rights Courts

- a. African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights: <https://en.african-court.org/>
- b. ECOWAS Court of Justice:  
<https://www.ecowas.int/institutions/community-court-of-justice/>
- c. European Court on Human and People's Rights: <https://echr.coe.int/>
- d. Inter-American Court of Human Rights:  
<https://www.corteidh.or.cr/index.cfm?lang=en>

## II. Rapporteurs of Regional Intergovernmental Bodies

- a. Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)'s Representative on Freedom of the Media.  
Website: <https://www.osce.org/representative-on-freedom-of-media>
- b. Organization of American States' (OAS) Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression. Website: <http://www.oas.org/en/iachr/expression/index.asp>
- c. African Union Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information.  
Website: <http://www.achpr.org/mechanisms/freedom-of-expression/>

## III. International Civil Society Organizations and their Networks (non-exhaustive)

- a. The global Freedom of Expression eXchange (IFEX): A network of organizations connected by a shared commitment to defend and promote freedom of expression as a fundamental human right, including international NGOs such as ARTICLE 19, the Committee to Protect Journalists, Reporters without Borders, the International Press Institute, International Media Support et al. <https://www.ifex.org>
- b. The Global Forum for Media Development: A knowledge platform with more than 190 members and partners, acting to support journalism and media through collaboration, knowledge exchange, and advocacy. The platform also seeks to foster

Photo credit: Abbas Al Wadi



viable and independent journalism, greater transparency, and more pluralistic media environments: <https://gfmd.info/>

#### IV. International Media Representatives

a. The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ): The world's largest organization of journalists, representing over 600,000 media professionals from 187 trade unions and associations in more than 140 countries:

<https://www.ifj.org/who/about-ifj.html>

b. The World Association of Newspapers (WAN/IFRA):

<http://www.wanifra.org/>

c. The European, Asian-Pacific, and Arab Broadcasting Unions (EBU, ABU and ASBU). Websites: <https://www.ebu.ch/home>; <https://www.abu.org.my/>;

[www.asbu.net](http://www.asbu.net)

#### V. Other International Networks and Organizations, such as:

a. The Inter-Parliamentary Union: [www.ipu.org](http://www.ipu.org)

b. The Journalism Safety Research Network (JSRN), to advance academic research communication and collaboration in the area of journalism safety:

<http://www.cfom.org.uk/our-networks/journalism-safety-researchnetwork-new/>

c. Networks of judiciary organizations (e.g. Judicial Schools from Ibero-America), of independent media regulators (e.g. African Communication Regulatory Authorities Network, ACRAM; Latin American Network Information Center, LANIC), network and electoral management bodies.

d. Press Freedom Partnership. Initiated by The Washington Post, the Press Freedom Partnership aims to highlight organizations working vigilantly to promote press freedom and raise awareness of the rights of journalists worldwide.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/pressfreedom/>

#### VI. National Human Rights Bodies and Special Mechanisms

a. National Mechanisms for the protection of media professionals and human rights organizations.

#### VII. National Civil Society Organizations and Media Representatives



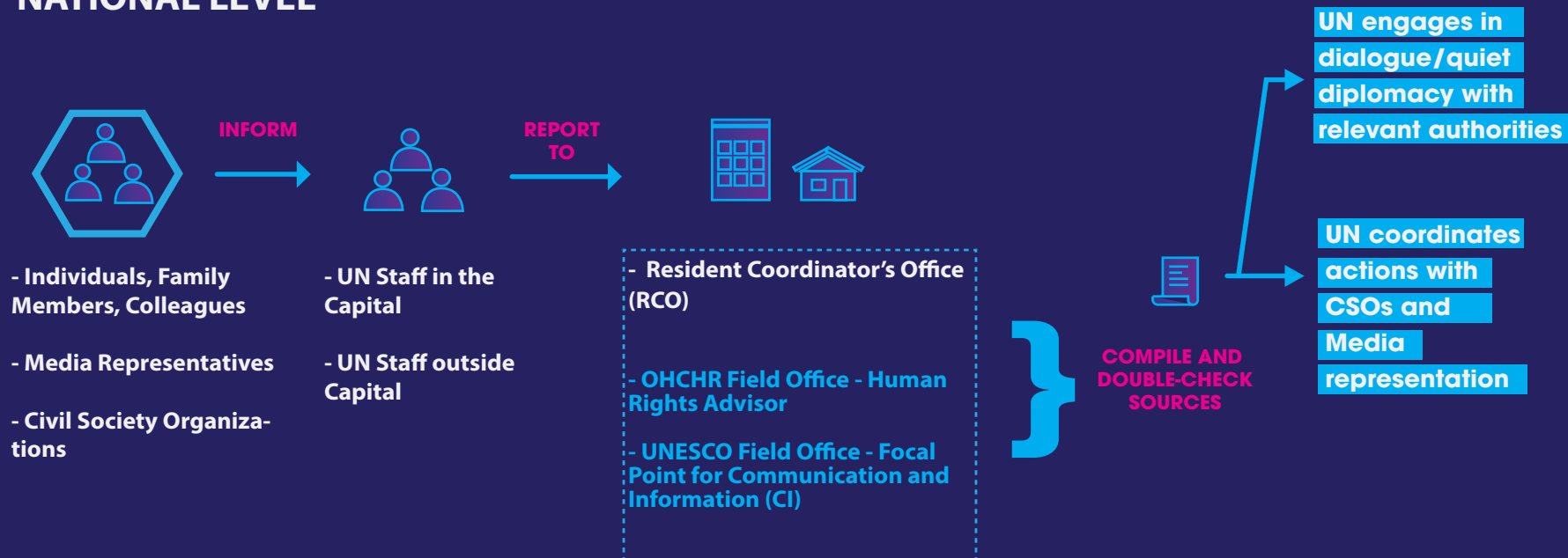
Photo credit: Hinda Jama



# WHAT TO DO

# WHEN INFORMED ABOUT AN

## NATIONAL LEVEL



## REGIONAL LEVEL







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What is the UN doing to promote safety of journalists? Which are the UN bodies with a specific mandate to monitor attacks against journalists? What is the role of other agencies that are not directly involved? Is safety of journalists relevant to the SDGs? How is the UN's work on safety of journalists coordinated? Responding to the above questions, this Resource Kit titled "UN and the Safety of Journalists" focuses on providing the tools and basic knowledge to non-specialised UN staff in country offices as well as in the regional and global headquarters. It aims to provide background information as well as practical guidance in addressing issues related to safety of journalists and impunity.

Too often, journalists and media workers face threats and attacks in the pursuit of their profession. Each year, hundreds of cases ranging from harassment to non-lethal and lethal attacks occur in the media community around the globe. This happens both in conflict and non-conflict situations. The proportion of journalists killed in the latter has increased in recent years, and in 2017 has exceeded the number of those killed in countries in armed conflict.

This Resource Kit is the first prepared by the two co-chairs of the UN Focal Points Network of Safety of Journalists – OHCHR and UNESCO. It is targeted to UN entities and colleagues with the aim to upscale the ONE-UN approach to promoting the safety of journalists and freedom of expression.

**For more information, please visit:**

**<https://en.unesco.org/un-plan-action-safety-journalists>**

**#EndImpunity**

**#PressFreedom**

**#ProtectJournalists**

