



Justice and Freedom of the Press: How to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists

Giustizia e libertà di stampa: Come fermare l'impunità per i reati contro i giornalisti

Roundtable discussion on the theme of investigating and prosecuting threats, attacks, and crimes against journalists on 3rd November 2021 at 10:00 a.m. in Syracuse (Italy)

Promoted by Ossigeno per l'Informazione NGO on behalf of UNESCO to celebrate the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists (IDEI)

PRESENTATION

The roundtable fits in with the philosophy of this year's IDEI commemorations fixed by UNESCO in a Concept Note that assigns a key role to this roundtable.

The panel takes on board speakers coming from three European countries where killings of journalists recently occurred that raised alarm and concerns in Europe to the maximum level about how the safety and the protection of journalists can be guaranteed to prevent serious and fatal events. Speakers from Italy have much to talk about at the roundtable. In Italy not one new protection measure or judicial procedure has been put in force, despite the fact that there has been for many years an accurate independent monitoring of threats and intimidations, unequalled in Europe, that demonstrated that this kind of violence occurs every day and that the level of impunity for such crimes is very high.

The roundtable will be constituted by journalist and prosecutors from Denmark, Italy, Greece, and Malta, as well as from representatives from UNESCO and from the International Association of Prosecutors (IAP). The names are listed below, along with short biographies.

FOCUS

The theme addresses the need to move from the initial outrage due to the intimidation faced by journalists and the impunity for their aggressors, to the more active phase of discussion and concrete implementation of possible countermeasures at the legislative, judicial, journalistic and editorial level.

Threats of violence and attacks against journalists contribute to a climate of fear for media professionals, impeding the free circulation of information, opinions and ideas for all citizens. It is therefore important to investigate and prosecute these threats as well, in order to avoid having them turn into actions.

MODALITY

The roundtable will be held in Syracuse (Sicily) in the lecture hall of the [Siracusa International Institute for Criminal Justice and Human Rights](#), via Logoteta 27, in a hybrid format, with both the physical and online presence of the speakers and the public, observing restrictions imposed by the pandemic (distancing, green pass, and seating capacity reduced by half). The audience attendance will be enhanced by the bilingual direct streaming and by the live online broadcast to a group of 50 journalists organised by the *Ordine dei Giornalisti* to attend the event as a training course, with the possibility to interact through submitting written questions. Moreover, a larger public will be connected through the Zoom and YouTube platforms. Part of this attendance will also be able to interact live by sending written comments and questions.

The debate is structured in two sessions, starting at 10:00 a.m., for a total time of three hours, with a 15-minutes break between the two sessions.

AGENDA

WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS, 10:00 a.m.

Giovanni Salvi (remote), Attorney General at the Italian Supreme Court

Francesco Italia (remote), Mayor of the city of Siracusa

Tawfik Jelassi (remote), UNESCO's Assistant Director-General for Communication and Information

Jean-François Thony, President of The Siracusa International Institute

Alberto Spampinato (Moderator), President of *Ossigeno per l'Informazione* NGO – Introduction, presentation of the theme of the event, and why we need new ways to end impunity for threats of violence against journalists.

Screening of UNESCO's video explainer series – [How to stop impunity for crimes against journalists](#)

1ST SESSION, 10.30 a.m. - Journalists, Prosecutors and the Issue of Impunity: Experiences from Greece, Italy and Malta

1. **Eugenio Albamonte**, Magistrate, deputy prosecutor in Rome;
2. **Marilù Mastrogiovanni**, Journalist threatened by the Mafia, Chair of the Jury of UNESCO/ Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize;
3. **Guilherme Canela**, Chief of UNESCO's Section of Freedom of Expression and Safety of Journalists;
4. **Dalia Nasreddin**, Legal Officer of the Daphne Caruana Galizia Foundation;
5. **Elena Kaniadakis**, Greek journalist, lives in Athens, collaborates with La Repubblica and Euronews.

Debate, Questions & Answers

Coffee break (15-minutes)

2ND SESSION, 12.00 p.m. - Strengthening Capacities and Cooperation to End Impunity

Presentation on UNESCO and the IAP's joint [Guidelines for Prosecutors on Cases of Crimes against Journalists](#) and upcoming training for prosecutors.

6. **Han Moral (remote)**, IAP Secretary General
7. **Sabin Ouellet (remote)**, President-Directeur general S2G Management Groupe conseil
8. **Michele Albanese**, Journalist who is under police protection due to threats received from the Mafia since 2014;
9. **Saba Ashraf**, Senior Legal Officer at Media Defence in London. Solicitor in the areas of criminal defence, extradition and civil litigation international and human.
10. **Federico Cafiero de Raho**, Magistrate, the Italian National anti-Mafia and anti-terrorism prosecutor who has proposed new rules for the protection of journalists;
11. **Thomas Bruning (remote)**, General Secretary of the Dutch Association of Journalists and Director of Villamedia publishing company. He is also the founder, board member and secretary of the Dutch Press Freedom foundation.

Debate, Questions & Answers

CONCLUSION AND CLOSING REMARKS, 13.00 –13.30

BACKGROUND OF THIS ROUNDTABLE

The UNESCO Concept Note for the commemoration of the 2021 International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists stresses that *“in many cases, threats of violence and attacks against journalists are not properly investigated”* and that this lack of investigations *“too often, lead to more severe aggressions and murders”*.

This happens, the Concept Note adds, despite all commitments to implement at national and regional levels the United Nations General Assembly Resolution [A/RES/68/163](#) adopted at its 68th session in 2013, which proclaimed the 2nd November as the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists (IDEI) and other calls to face the extensive impunity with *“the creation of a safe environment for media workers”* through joint initiatives from *“UN agencies, regional bodies, Member States, members of the judiciary, civil society and the media (...) to ensure accountability and bring to justice perpetrators of crimes against journalists and media workers”*.

The same document refers to the final [Declaration](#) of the 14th United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, that *“recognized the specificity of threats faced by journalists (...)”* and called for actions from Member States to *“Investigate, prosecute and punish threats and acts of violence, falling within their jurisdiction, committed against journalists and media workers, (...) with a view to ending impunity for crimes committed against them”*.

UNESCO has then asked to focus this year’s commemorations of IDEI to *“highlight the instrumental role of prosecutorial services, in investigating and prosecuting not only killings but also threats of violence against journalists”*. In this context UNESCO decided to hold as *“a high-level roundtable”* with representatives from the Italian State prosecutorial services, journalists and legal experts thus *“providing a platform for dialogue among prosecutors and journalists on prevention and protection measures to address the safety of journalists”*, also for online and gendered-based threats against women journalists.

As a basis for the discussion, UNESCO suggested [the Guidelines for prosecutors on cases of crimes against journalists](#), jointly published by UNESCO and the International Association of Prosecutors, which are now available in 16 languages, with an upcoming translation in Italian. Furthermore it has put on the table the *World Trends Report Insights* paper on the Safety Chapter, that will be published on the occasion of this year’s IDEI, including the most recent UNESCO data on killings and impunity as well as an overview of global trends in the field of safety of journalists, and the recommendations of the [Windhoek +30 Declaration](#), adopted at the culmination of the 2021 World Press Freedom Day in Namibia. UNESCO also hopes that *“the role of investigative journalism in uncovering these threats, informing prosecutors of their findings, as well as keeping them accountable”* will be discussed.

The UNESCO concept note for the 2021 IDEI once more affirms that *“ending impunity for crimes against journalists is one of the most pressing issues to guarantee freedom of expression and access to information for all citizens”* and underlines that *“between 2006 and 2020, over 1,200 journalists have been killed around the world, with close to 9 out of 10 cases of these killings remaining judicially unresolved”*, according to the [UNESCO observatory of killed journalists](#). The document also stresses that *“this cycle of violence against journalists is often an indicator of the weakening of the rule of law and of the judicial system”*. It highlights also that *“while killings are the most extreme form of media censorship, journalists are also subjected to countless threats - ranging from kidnapping, torture and other physical attacks to harassment, particularly in the digital sphere and that threats of violence and attacks against journalists in particular create a climate of fear for media professionals, impeding the free circulation of information, opinions and ideas for all citizens”*. And this is why it is, therefore, essential to strengthen the investigations and prosecutions of threats of violence against journalists in order to prevent crimes against them.