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GLOBAL MEDIA DEFENCE FUND



CONTEXT

The number of assaulted or murdered journalists has steadily increased around the globe over the last decade. Between 2010 and 2020, UNESCO condemned the killing of over 950 journalists, while the trend of widespread impunity for the crimes committed against them persists: roughly nine out of 10 killings of journalists around the world remain unpunished.

9 out of **10**
murders committed against
journalists remain unpunished

The ability of journalists to report the news and bring verified information to the public is being hampered by a wide range of attacks and violations, including threats, harassment, economic pressures, abusive judicial prosecutions (e.g. SLAPPs), arbitrary detentions, and a lack of access to specialized and gender-sensitive legal assistance. The resulting self-censorship deprives society of information and has a lasting impact on press freedom.

As the specialized UN agency in charge of promoting freedom of expression and press freedom, and the global coordinator of the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity, UNESCO works closely together with Member States, media organizations and other key stakeholders to create a free and safe environment for journalists.



The Fund is a responsive and effective mechanism

It supports not-for-profit civil society organizations working on the ground to implement innovative programming for enhancing media protection and improving the access of journalists to specialized and gender-sensitive legal assistance.

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The **Global Media Defence Fund** is a Multi-Partner Trust Fund/Program established within the framework of the *Global Campaign for Media Freedom*, thanks to initial donations by United Kingdom and Canada.

Administered by UNESCO, the Fund is a responsive and effective mechanism to support not-for-profit civil society organizations working on the ground to implement innovative programming for **enhancing media protection** and **improving the access of journalists to specialized and gender-sensitive legal assistance**. The Fund operates through four key approaches or outputs:

- **Output 1: Fostering** *international legal cooperation, as well as the sharing and implementation of good practices to promote the defense of journalists under attack;*
- **Output 2: Reinforcing** *the operationalization of national protection mechanisms and peer support networks to ensure journalists' rapid access to legal assistance, bolster their defense and enhance their safety, taking into account the gendered nature of the threats they face;*
- **Output 3: Supporting** *investigative journalism that contributes to reduced impunity for crimes against journalists, and enhancing the safety of those conducting this line of work;*
- **Output 4: Enhancing** *structures for fostering strategic litigation in order to protect environments where the legal frameworks are conducive to an independent, free and pluralistic media ecosystem.*



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The Fund's Outputs are achieved through joint cooperation with specialized implementation partners, including specialized NGOs, media associations, journalists' unions, human right defenders, lawyers' associations and pro bono legal aid organizations, investigative journalism networks, foundations, academic institutions, and other not-for profit entities – as well as the International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute (IBAHRI) and the Media Freedom Coalition's Consultative Network.

The first Call for Partnerships of the Fund was launched in April 2020 with the aim of financing local, regional and international projects seeking to bolster the legal protection of journalists and/ or enhance media freedom through investigative journalism or strategic litigation. UNESCO received 110 partnership proposals from not-for-profit organizations, representing all regions of the world and targeting over 50 countries. The Organization is currently supporting the implementation of 41 projects selected out of the 2020 Call, which –according to preliminary results– are directly benefiting over 1 700 journalists, 170 lawyers, 65 CSOs, 4 newspapers, and 30 prosecutors – and which will result in over 850 cases of legal assistance, 46 strategic litigation processes or interventions, and over 100 journalistic investigations on crimes against journalists, amongst many other deliverables houses under the weight of excessive legal costs.

The second Call for Partnerships of the Fund

was launched in April 2021 and received over 140 proposals from candidates from all around the globe, maintaining the geographic coverage of the first Call. A majority of these proposals were submitted by national or grassroots organizations from the Global South. Support to projects selected out of this Call will be rolled out in the Fall-Spring of 2021/2022.

The Fund contributes to achieving the UN Plan of Action on Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity. It complements and synergizes with projects implemented under UNESCO's regular program and other extra-budgetary modalities supporting the Organization's work on safety of journalists and the issue of impunity – including UNESCO's initiative to support the role of security forces and the judiciary in protecting and ensuring an environment conducive to freedom of expression, as well as the Multi-Donor Programme on Freedom of Expression and Safety of Journalists and the International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC).

Second Call for Partnerships
140 proposals
**116 from national/
grassroots candidates**

CONTRIBUTING TO THE FUND



The Global Media Defence Fund is currently open to voluntary contributions from Member States and other donors. All contributions are pooled into a single, special account, and expenditures are not linked to specific donations. UNESCO will provide a consolidated narrative and financial report on the use of the pooled resources to all donors.

The following donors have pledged a contribution to the GMDF:

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CONTACT & INFORMATION

For further information on the GMDF:

<https://en.unesco.org/global-media-defence-fund>

If you wish to pledge a contribution to support the GMDF, please contact:

Jessica Jeavons

Chief, Section for Mobilizing
Government Partner Resources
j.jeavons@unesco.org

Andrea Cairola

Programme Specialist
Section for Freedom of Expression
and Safety of Journalists
a.cairola@unesco.org

#ProtectJournalists
#EndImpunity
#defendmediafreedom

**Learn more about UNESCO's monitoring
of cases of killing of journalists:**

<https://en.unesco.org/themes/safety-journalists/observatory>

For more information, please visit:

<https://en.unesco.org/global-media-defence-fund>

Contact Information:

gmdf@unesco.org

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