

UNESCO

Medellin Declaration Securing the Safety of Journalists and Combating Impunity

We, the participants at the UNESCO conference on Press Freedom, Safety of Journalists and Impunity, meeting in Medellin, Colombia, on World Press Freedom Day, 3 May 2007,

Deeply concerned by attacks on the freedom of expression of the press including murder, deliberate attacks, abductions, hostage-taking, harassment, intimidation, illegal arrest and detention against journalists, media professionals and associated personnel because of their professional activity,

Believing that press freedom can only be enjoyed when media professionals are free from intimidation, pressure and coercion, whether from political, social, economic forces,

Recalling Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that guarantees freedom of expression as a fundamental right, and *confirming* that freedom of expression is essential to the realization of other rights set forth in international human rights instruments,

Recalling 29 C/Resolution 29 entitled “Condemnation of violence against journalists”, adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO on 12 November 1997, which condemns violence against journalists and call uphold their obligations to prevent, investigate and punish crimes against journalists,

Underscoring the provisions of the Colombo Declaration of 3 May 2006 on Media and Poverty Eradication, and Dakar Declaration of 3 May 2005 on Media and Good Governance, and of the Belgrade Declaration of 3 May 2004 on Media in Violent Conflict and Countries in Transition,

Welcoming the adoption by the Security Council of the United Nations of Resolution 1738 on 23 December 2006 calling on all parties to an armed conflict to fulfil their obligations towards journalists under international law, including the need to prevent impunity for crimes against them and *further requesting* the Secretary-General to include as a sub-item in his next reports on the protection of civilians in armed conflict the issue of the safety and security of journalists, media professionals and associated personnel,

Noting the potential contribution of a free, independent and pluralistic press to sustainable development, poverty eradication, good governance, peace and reconciliation, and respect for human rights,

Urging all the parties concerned to ensure the safety of journalists, media professionals and associated personnel, and respect for their media equipment and installations,

Considering that most murders of media professionals occur outside of conflict zones and that the safety of media professionals is an urgent problem that is not limited to situations of armed conflict,

Reaffirming our condemnation of all incitement to violence against media professionals,

Call on Member States:

To investigate all acts of violence of which journalists, media professionals and associated personnel are victim which have occurred in their territory or abroad when their armed or security forces may have been involved in them;

To search for persons alleged to have committed, or to have ordered to be committed, a crime against journalists, media professionals or associated personnel, to bring such persons, regardless of their nationality, before their own courts or to hand them over for trial to another concerned State, provided this State has made out a credible case against the said persons;

To fulfil the duty incumbent upon them to prevent crimes against journalists, media professionals and associated personnel, to investigate them, to sanction them, to provide witness protection for those testifying against them and to repair the consequences so that such crimes do not go unpunished;

To adopt the principle that there should be no statute of limitations for crimes against persons when these are perpetrated to prevent the exercise of freedom of information and expression or when their purpose is the obstruction of justice;

To release immediately journalists detained to this day for having freely exercised their profession;

To promote awareness and train their armed forces and police forces to respect and promote the safety of journalists in situations of risk, and to ensure that journalists are able to work in full security and independence in their territory;

To recommend to multilateral and bilateral institutions of international cooperation and financial assistance that they require from recipient countries as a specific condition of eligibility respect for freedom of expression and effective protection of the exercise of press freedom, also to recommend to these institutions that a state's failure to comply with its obligation to investigate and punish killers of journalists could be cause for revision, suspension or revocation of such cooperation;

To sign and ratify the Additional Protocols I and II to the Geneva Conventions, the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and other relevant international instruments of international humanitarian law and international human rights law, and to take the appropriate legislative, judicial and administrative measures to ensure application of the aforementioned instruments nationally, in so far as they provide protection for civilians, in particular those working in journalism;

To comply with the commitments of UNESCO Resolution 29 to promote legislation with the intention of investigating and adjudicating the killers of journalists and to combat impunity;

Call on International Community and Professional Associations:

To take resolute action for the safety of journalists in situations of risk and to ensure respect for their professional independence;

To sensitize news organizations, editors and managers about the dangers surrounding their staff when covering hazardous stories, particularly the dangers present to local journalists;

To urge news associations to develop and sustain safety provisions that work regardless of whether their staff are covering domestic stories such as crime and corruption, disasters and demonstrations or health issues or international armed conflict;

To promote actions that secure the safety of journalists, including, but not limited to, safety training for journalists, safety codes, healthcare and life insurance, and equal access to social protection for free-lance employees and full-time staff;

To coordinate widespread publicity campaigns on unpunished crimes against journalists and other acts of violence to bring about news coverage of all violations of press freedom;

To encourage journalism schools and mass communication departments to include in their curricula studies on the impact that crimes against journalists – and subsequent impunity – have on democratic societies. In addition to promote the inclusion in the curricula of subjects or specific courses on press freedom and to coordinate activities, including safety training, among press freedom associations, news media and journalism schools;

To further encourage collaboration amongst journalists, media owners, educators, press freedom groups and appropriate development agencies, at national and global level, to ensure the inclusion of media development activities in social and economic development programmes;

Call on UNESCO:

To invite the Director General of UNESCO to study, in consultation with the relevant international organizations and non-governmental organizations:

- (a) to act in favour of measures to better ensure application of the rules and principles of a humanitarian nature safeguarding journalists, media professionals and associated personnel in situations of armed conflict, and to promote the security of the persons concerned;
- (b) to work against the emergence of new threats to journalists and media staff, including hostage-taking and kidnapping;
- (c) to encourage mechanisms for including media development in programmes aimed at improving the social, economic and political life of societies in the process of development, political transition or emerging from the crisis of social conflict.

To require that data be submitted to the General Conference in a report on crimes against journalists and the number of cases that continue with impunity;

To sensitize governments regarding the importance of freedom of expression and threat that impunity for crimes against media professionals represents to this freedom;

To invite the Director General of UNESCO to recall to member states at the General Conference their legal and moral obligations to comply with Resolution 29 and prevent crimes against journalists.