

The Hague Commitment to increase the Safety of Journalists

On 9 December 2020, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of _____ convened upon initiative of the Kingdom of the Netherlands on the occasion of the World Press Freedom Conference 2020, jointly celebrating the World Press Freedom Day and the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes Against Journalists, to address the importance of the safety of journalists and media workers and the problem of impunity for crimes against them,

1. Recognizing that freedom of expression and free, independent and plural media, online and offline, are indispensable cornerstones for the building and sustaining of democratic, inclusive and peaceful societies, based on human rights, the rule of law and accountability;
2. Deeply alarmed by the targeted killings, threats, intimidation, harassment, unlawful detention and legal pressure against journalists and media workers, including through domestic legislation, in an effort to silence them, as well as the prevailing high rate of impunity for attacks against journalists, as reflected in the UNESCO Director-General's Report on the Safety of Journalists and the World Trends Report on Freedom of Expression and Media Development¹;
3. Acknowledging pressures on the global information ecosystem, including by measures imposed in response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, that seriously threaten the space for free, open and inclusive debate within our societies and endanger the very existence of independent media and journalism online and offline;
4. Mindful that independent journalism is an indispensable cornerstone for well-functioning democratic societies in which the general public is well-informed by accurate information and facts, and where leaders and government are held to account;
5. Recalling our responsibility to promote and protect the right to freedom of expression, both online and offline, as well as a safe and enabling environment for free, independent and pluralistic media, and to promote the safety of journalists and ensure accountability for crimes against them as reflected in United Nations resolutions² and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular SDG 16.10, and regional commitments;
6. Further recalling the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity, the Global Pledge on Media Freedom launching the Media Freedom Coalition, as well as the Media Freedom Coalition Ministerial Communique (2020) and other existing frameworks advancing the safety of journalists;
7. Dedicated to fostering a global environment in which journalists and media workers can work safely and independently, without fear or favour, and perpetrators of crimes committed against them will be held accountable;
8. Recognizing the need for more concerted efforts and action by all stakeholders concerned, in particular actors in the field of justice and law enforcement, on national, regional and international level, including through mechanisms such as the Special Procedures and treaty bodies, to combat impunity for crimes against journalists;

¹ <https://en.unesco.org/themes/safety-journalists/dgreport>

² UN Human Rights Council resolutions: HRC 45/18 (2020), HRC 44/12 (2020), HRC 39/6 (2018), HRC 33/2 (2016), HRC 27/5 (2014) and HRC 21/12 (2012); UNGA resolutions: A/RES/74/157 (2019), A/C.3/72/L.35/REV.1 (2017), 70/162 (2016); A/RES/70/162 (2016);), 69/185 (2014) and 68/163 (2013); UN Security Council resolutions: 2222 (2015); S/RES/1738 (2006); UNESCO's General Conference resolutions: Resolution 29 (1997); Resolution 53 (2011); Resolution 39 (2017); Resolution 52 (2019).

9. Condemning acts and threats of violence against journalists and media workers and recognizing the specific nature of threats against female journalists, including sexual and gender based violence; and
10. Urging for the immediate and unconditional release of all arbitrarily detained journalists and media workers imprisoned for their work;

Conscious of the need to operationalize the extensive normative framework guiding the issue of the safety of journalists and media workers, therefore commit to:

1. Implement the commitments contained in the United Nations Plan of Action for the safety of journalists and the issue of impunity to ensure a free, safe and enabling environment for journalists and media workers;
2. Undertake urgent engagement at the political level to create or maintain effective prevention and protection measures as well as effective mechanisms at the national level, for example through national action plans, to receive alerts on threats and all forms of violence experienced by journalists and media workers, to ensure that investigations into these incidents are prompt and effective, and perpetrators of such violence are brought to justice in order to break the cycle of impunity for violence against journalists and media workers at the national level;
3. Utilize the Universal Periodic Review and Sustainable Development Goals Voluntary National Review processes, as applicable, to report on the safety of journalists and efforts to tackle impunity, as well as encourage progress in other States by means of these processes;
4. Respond to the requests of the Director-General of UNESCO to report on the status of judicial enquiries conducted into journalists killed on their national soil;
5. Support and co-sponsor, as applicable, the biennial United Nations Human Rights Council and the United Nations General Assembly resolutions as well as resolutions by UNESCO governing bodies with strong provisions for strengthening the safety of journalists and tackling impunity for crimes committed against them;
6. Cooperate with available regional mechanisms in view to fostering early warning mechanisms and ensure timely and effective follow-up on regional level;
7. Undertake independent investigation and prosecution of all forms of online and offline crimes against journalists and media workers whilst addressing promptly and effectively specific risks, challenges and threats that female journalists and media workers face due to their gender, online as well as offline, and to provide them with adequate support; and
8. Support the UN Special Procedures in order to address the safety of journalists and media workers, including by responding to their requests.