

## Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

**Topic A: Rights of journalists in countries in conflict.**

**President: Anette Egoavil Ramirez**

**Moderator: Job Harry Rivera Monter**

**Official Assistant: Karla Suastegui**

### INTRODUCTION

In the last 10 years more than 800 journalists and media workers have been killed, and the UN has to protect the journalist who are troubled all around the world by the circumstances of their jobs. The UN has the responsibility to keep the journalist safe abroad and make sure their human rights are being respected. This is not a new problem for their vocation involved; this is one of the biggest issues since the beginning of the UN. This problem has been affected most of the countries since the XX century.

During violent conflicts, the reporters are exposed to more dangers. An example of this could be the Iraq conflict. In this situation are some countries who it has more problems than other ones because of their political context. Countries who has more criminal power are mostly in danger and to have everything under control mostly of them avoids problems. (China, Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, etc).

Also with similar situation there are some countries from Latin America (Mexico, Colombia, Venezuela, etc) and by his laws are getting affected countries from Europe, Africa and Asia. Countries that has more political power and by this doesn't have too much problems are mainly on North Africa, North Europe and South Africa.

These ones are the countries were almost all the information that is presented to the population, are processed by the government, deciding what does the people will be able to see and hear about the rest of the world.

Almost every country in the world has suffered from this problem, because in most of them there is not a totality free press, and journalist does not have their safety guaranteed by its own government. Only the 13% of the population have an accessible "free press" and more than the 45% of the population in the world, live in countries where the

media environment is not completely free.

Journalism is not an easy task especially nowadays. On South Europe are countries who get affected because the decline of journalism is a thread for democracy as we know it there before and no less important every day there is more fear and journalism decreases in countries that are involved in armed conflicts, because of the lack of safety in these countries, the countries are qualified as safe or unsafe countries for journalists to go and do their job.

According to "Freedom House", historical trends in press freedom had increased since the year 1986, there were 55% of the press was not free now on the year 2016 we can tell that 33% of the press is not free while the 31% of the press is free and the 36% of the press is partly free. This is a problem because journalists can't really express themselves and when they report about stuff that the government is not happy about, ends up with journalists having legal problems, and in cases where journalists are in states with conflict is hard to give them a guarantee of keeping their rights safe as civilians.

By "Freedom House", the historical antecedents that are known, are that in the year of 1986 the 55% of the press was not free, and on the year of 2016 the 33% of the press was non-free.

In accordance to committee to protect journalists: In recent years, the amount of journalists that have get killed has not really decreased making 2015 one of the most dangerous years for journalists. The people who are journalists has not decreased because of the legal problems that they have in countries with conflict, but the amount of reports about certain topics has decreased in countries where the press is not free.

Every day there are more cases where the rights of the journalists are not being respected, cases where journalists all around the globe are disappearing, and cases where journalists are murdered for somehow investigating the wrong people, making this a theme of concern not just for the UN but also for OHCHR colliding with UNESCO and other associations which one of their goals is to stop the impunity and to stop the violations of the rights of journalism all around the world.

According to Committee to protect Journalists: "Three editors including Byarabaha, and five co-owners of Pepper Publications, the newspaper's parent company, were on November 27 charged with three counts of libel, three counts of offensive communication and one count of publishing information that is prejudicial to security, according to

a charge sheet seen by CPJ and media reports." Prosecutors said the charges relate to an article published on November 20 in Red Pepper stating that Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni was planning to overthrow Rwandan President Paul Kagame. According to Reuters, the article cited unnamed sources.

Uganda's foreign ministry accused the newspaper of reproducing a "malicious" article that had originally been published by a Rwandan outlet. According to Reuters, newspapers in Uganda have recently reported on tensions between Uganda and Rwanda.

Prosecutors claimed that the story discussed military operations and strategies in a manner "likely to disrupt public order and security" in violation of section 37 of the penal code. This offense carries a sentence of up to seven years in prison.

Prosecutors also said that Red Pepper intended to defame Museveni, his brother, defense adviser General Salim Saleh, and Security Minister Lieutenant Henry Tumukunde. Under Ugandan law this charge carries a prison sentence of up to two years."

According to Committee to protect Journalists and in order to real facts: "Police detained Hayot Nasriddinov, a Tashkent-based freelance journalist, on October 20, 2017, the independent journalist Aleksey Volosevich told CPJ. Neither Volosevich nor CPJ could determine whether Nasriddinov had been charged. Nasriddinov, who also goes by Khan Nasriddinov, contributed to U.S. Congress-funded Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's Russian Service, the independent regional news website Fergana, and other outlets. He covered economics, politics, and social issues in Uzbekistan as well as Russia.

One of the most recent articles Nasriddinov authored before his imprisonment was an analysis of Uzbekistan's economic reforms published on the independent regional news site Centrasia in September 2017. According to Volosevich and media reports, Uzbek authorities held Nasriddinov incommunicado in the weeks after his arrest, in a detention center belonging to the security services, known as SNB. Volosevich told CPJ that he tried to interview Nasriddinov's family but his relatives were not willing to talk to journalists for fear of reprisal from the government. The exiled leader of an opposition political group, Sunshine Uzbekistan, Nigora Khidoyatova, who knows Nasriddinov personally, told the U.S. Congress-funded Voice of America, citing mutual friends, that neither the family nor the state-appointed

lawyer had been able to visit the journalist.

## **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

This problem has existed since the 1900s and it is one of the most important for UN. There have been hundreds of cases where the rights for the journalist had been disrespect and violated. According to the UN statistics, more than 600 journalists had been murdered in the last 10 years. This conflict has taken place in some countries are already mentioned, such as Mexico, USA, Cuba, North Korea, etc.

As the journalists are not part of the armed forces, they have a civilian status therefore benefit from the corresponding protection. Where the International humanitarian law protects journalists as civilians. Deliberated attacks reprisals threats and many other criminal actions are prohibited, according Geneva Conventions of 1949 and the two Additional Protocols of 1977. "War correspondents to the persons who follow armed forces".

In conflict zones, the leading cause of death for journalists and media workers is not cross-fire, or collateral damage, as most of the people might think, Despite the status of a journalist in a conflict which would as a civilian, these journalists and media workers are primarily killed as deliberate targets, where local journalists are the majority of victims, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists "Local journalists comprise 85% of media casualties in conflict zones."

In Iraq 37 journalist have been registered murdered since 2006, in Sri Lanka and Colombia there have been 3 and in Afghanistan 2; all of this place where registered to be in battlefield during these casualties.

Since many years conflict and post-conflict zones are difficult environments for the journalists to work at, one of the worst recent examples is Iraq, where 69 media professionals were killed, and more than 170 media workers, have been killed in that country since the conflict began in 2003, according to UNESCO " Never recorded in history has there been such a large-scale killing of journalists".

The conflict in Somalia is also an example of insecurity, because for more than 16 years mutually ruinous warfare and extensive insecurity, have caused a large number of deaths and displacement of people, for example, in 2006, 30 cases of attacks on the press were recorded, making 2006 the most dangerous place for press freedom in a decade. The National Union of Somali Journalists has shown great courage in talking about this crimes, and by fighting this crimes with the use of word and press.

The Red Cross for the last decades has always been there for journalists in the zone of conflict making the Red Cross one of the best supporters of fighting against impunity and in pro for keeping the rights of journalists safe all around the world.

Every aggression against a journalists is an attack to our press freedom and press freedom, which also shows a lack on democracy, making this hard for journalists to go and do their job in countries that are involved in a armed conflict.

Blindfolding this problem to the world since the XX century caused that in 2013, the results had grown and there were 123 registered deaths and more of these reporters have disappeared and there is not an exact number of this ones.

An evidence for this was presented in the year already mentioned [2013], in Colombia a man named José Dario Arenas was shot several times by unidentified attackers in the town of Caicedonia, were he was selling copies of regional daily "Extra Quindío", which ran a story of complaints by relatives of inmates at the Caicedonia prison who accused guards of mistreating them. And after this, the attacks did not stop, because the newspaper and the sellers continued receiving

threats, until they stopped talking anymore.

Nowadays the challenge of keeping safe the media in countries that are involved in armed conflicts and in countries where the freedom of press is not completely free lies at UNESCO which after WWII seeks to promote peace and security through international cooperation. Since the 20th century approximately, journalists have been persecuted because of the conflicts they could cause between countries and by the information they could divulge, affecting the government's and its control over the society.

Journalism is the main way by which information travels around the world and the society get to be informed. Because of this, the rights of the responsible to offer the world this information must be preserved, or this profession could get to its end and the information that will travel around the world would be only the one the countries what to share with it. The IFJ is now working on making companies to keep most of them safe, and also letting them share the information they work for.

Currently UNESCO is fighting against impunity which makes journalists an easy target, violating their rights and controlling the media with fear, that is why UNESCO stands firm to its constitutional mandate to "the free flow of ideas by word and image" and freedom of expression as a fundamental human right that must not be violated any where in the world. Without well-informed professionals, corruption cannot be exposed and societies cannot know the truth of what is happening in front of them.

Impunity exists when there is a lack of interest and political will to properly investigate the violation of the rights of journalists, it thrives on the incompetence, negligence and endemic corruption that often characterises the government and police of certain places that make journalism one of the most difficult jobs where your own safety and rights does not always come as an guaranteed.

World Press Freedom Day is an occasion to remind the world the importance of the free speech and the importance of protecting the journalists all around the world.

## **INTERNATIONAL ACTIONS**

The International Federation of Journalist (IFJ), are the responsibilities of helping with many important issues in the world, such as labor rights, safety, impunity, the press freedom, the gender equality, the discrimination and ethical journalism.

Its main project is to found campaigns and spread solidarity actions in order to promote some of the journalist leaders and make them influence them around the world.

Between 2010 and 2012 the goal was to achieve 2.5 billion of euros, to promote its campaigns. The projects are being promoted in Africa,

Asia, Middle East and Arab World, Europe and Latin America; making them important all around the world the countries in the world, which main themes to be treated are: safety and the press freedom around the world.

For a journalist to be intimate, theatre, or even killed is considered to be a press freedom violation. It is known that during the last 12 years approximately more than 1100 journalist have been killed during doing their labor, and that was because someone does not agree or think is right what he had said or because where they said or wrote it was not the right place to do it.

## UN ACTIONS

The plan of Action aims to create a free and safe environment for the journalists and media workers all across the world in conflict and non-conflict situations, in order to keep peace, democracy and development worldwide.

To further reinforce prevention, the Plan aims to work and cooperate with governments, media houses, professional associations and NGOs to conduct awareness raising campaigns on wide range of issues such as the growing dangers posed by emerging threats to media professionals.

**National Protection Mechanisms:** The development and implementation of nationally owned protection mechanisms for preventing attacks against journalists and combating impunity ensures a concrete focus on these issues from local legal actors.

**Monitoring & Reporting:** Journalists and media workers are under siege worldwide. Research on the global situation of press freedom and journalists safety.

## POINTS TO DISCUSS

- Actions of state governments that seek to affect the real news
- External threats to the government that affect journalists
- Repressions against journalists restricting the content of information.
- Legal effects that have unrealistic conditions for journalists.
- Journalists who are treated unworthily without being able to reveal information, in addition to arrests against their person.
- Freedom of expression. ¿What can journalist do?
- Policies protecting the rights of journalists
- Journalist duties due to the countries law and field work
- NGO related to the protection of journalist rights. ¿What are they commissioned for?

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