

SAIMUN 2017 Research Report

Committee: General Assembly 4

Issue: Promoting the freedom of press and the protection of journalists in conflicted areas

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1. Description of Issue

Media has always played an important role in society, and the freedom of information has often been a topic for debate. In particular, the freedom of press and the protection of journalists in conflicted areas has been greatly discussed, as a result of some of the acts of violence committed against journalists and members of the media community. To give an indication of the scale of the violence committed against members of the press, according to the Conseil D'Europe, there have been 16 journalists killed and 242 alerts across 33 countries since April of 2015. Another total, conducted by the committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) put the total number of journalists killed since 1992 at a staggering 1228. In this small window of time, the scale of the issue becomes clear, and in response, many countries have been working towards reinforcing the protection of journalism (specifically within zones of conflict). Some past attempts to solve this issue have included discussions such as Round Table conferences, and the establishment of event such as World Press Freedom Day, which promote the freedom of press and protection of journalists.

2. Definition of Key Terms

Journalism

The activity or profession of writing for newspapers, magazines, or news websites or preparing news to be broadcast as a form of public media.

Freedom of Press

Defined as the freedom of expression and the right to communicate through mediums including various electronic media and published materials without government interference or prior censorship.

Act of Violence

Intentional use of physical force against another person or against a group that has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, psychological harm, maldevelopment, deprivation of rights, or death.

Protection

Immunity from prosecution, a legal or other formal measure intended to preserve and therefore protect civil rights and liberties.

Conflict Area

Zones of land or countries that are temporarily or permanently affected by two or more factions that are waging war or civil war against each other; these can be low intensity or high intensity depending on the severity of the violence.

3. Timeline of Key Events

| Event | Description |
|--|---|
| 31 October, 2016 - Arrest of 12 Turkish Newspaper Employees | Turkish police arrested and detained at least 12 employees of <i>Cumhuriyet</i> newspaper, Turkey's largest and most influential left-leaning paper, one of the few publications that still continues to criticise the government. |
| 3 May, 2016 - Khadija Ismayilova wins World Press Freedom Prize | Investigative journalist from Azerbaijan, Khadija Ismayilova, wins the the 2016 UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize, after being sentenced to seven and a half years' imprisonment around charges relating to abuse of power. |

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|--|--|
| <p>7 January, 2015 - Attack on <i>Charlie Hebdo</i> in Paris</p> | <p>Although not in a direct conflict zone, the two armed gunmen that killed 12 and injured more in their attack on the Charlie Hebdo headquarters in Paris left a chilling impact on the journalism community. This attack on a satirical paper was a direct threat to the freedom of speech and liberty of expression of journalists.</p> |
| <p>September 14, 2015 - Roundtable to Discuss the: <i>International Declaration on the Protection of Journalists</i></p> | <p>The Declaration is intended to contribute to ongoing efforts to ensure implementation of international mechanisms related to journalists' safety and reduce the risks journalists face in covering the news. (<i>freemedia</i>)</p> |
| <p>May 3, 1993 - Establishment of World Press Freedom Day</p> | <p>3 May was proclaimed World Press Freedom Day the UN General Assembly in 1993. This was following recommendations made and adopted at the twenty-sixth session of UNESCO's General Conference in 1991. (<i>UNESCO</i>) The day celebrates the fundamental principles of press freedom around the world.</p> |
| <p>17 December 1986 - Guillermo Cano Isaza, is Assassinated</p> | <p>Colombian journalist was assassinated in front of his office, in Bogotá, on 17 December 1986. A 25,000\$ journalism prize was later created in his honor. (<i>UNESCO</i>)</p> |

4. Positions of Key Member Nations and Other Bodies on the Issue

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

As an organization, UNESCO works to address the social, environmental and economic issues of society. As for journalism, the organization places a strong emphasis on protecting journalists, as stated by their website, in which it is stated: “Promoting the safety of journalists and combating impunity for those who attack them are central elements within

UNESCO’s support for press freedom on all media platforms.” and the organization runs awareness and education programs to combat the issue.

Conseil D’Europe

The Conseil D’Europe, or Council of Europe is an organization that has created a platform dedicated to the protection of journalism, and in particular the safety of journalists. They keep track of attacks, arrests and other journalism related alerts, and provide statistical information.

International Press Institute (IPI)

The IPI is a “global network of journalists, editors and media executives” that aims to defend the freedom of the press and general media freedom primarily through publications and raising awareness.

International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

As stated by the ICRC website, “Media professionals are increasingly at risk of being wounded, killed, detained or kidnapped while reporting in armed-conflict situations.” which is why the ICRC treats the issue with deep concern and has a permanent hotline for Journalists who find themselves in armed conflicts or dangerous situations. Apart from just providing aid to journalists and media professionals in need, the ICRC helps to offer training, such as courses in humanitarian law, and first aid for warzone journalists.

Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ)

The CPJ an independent, and nonprofit organization that promotes press freedom worldwide through research and statistics, with the goal of protecting the rights of journalists.

5. Suggested Solutions

Over the past decade, journalistic violence has been a pressing issue and despite the many attempts and regulations put in place to try and solve the issue, it still remains one. But some of the biggest problems can be rectified, such as the implementation or creation of an

organization that could monitor and keep an overall database on the whereabouts of journalists in conflict zones, as to better informed as to their whereabouts and therefore diminish the likelihood of their disappearance. In addition, considering that journalists have increasingly become targeted, a reevaluation of security escortation should be held, and journalists should be offered the option of armed escortation when required within active combat zones. Finally, with many journalists going farther and farther into danger to bypass regulations and get stories, facilitating ease of access to combat zones for reporters would eliminate those extra risks, and still allow journalists who are determined to enter such zones to do so; but in a much more safe and controlled manner.

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