

Joint Statement - International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists

2 November 2023

As we are commemorating on the 2nd of November the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists, UNESCO and OHCHR in Yemen, would like to reiterate their commitment to support Yemeni journalists and media organizations in accordance with the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Journalism is a key component to ensure the full realisation of Human Rights. Journalists play an important role in keeping population informed allowing them to have access to sometimes vital information, especially in conflict settings, but also make informed decision and participate actively to their societies.

Investigative journalism, in particular, helps ensure that institutions are transparent and responsive. Online and offline independent media contribute to monitoring and early warning systems for the full range of potential human rights violations. And that is precisely why journalists are so frequently the targets of threats, violence and even murder.

Journalists in the conflict zones of our region, more than often risk their lives, to give voices to those who cannot express themselves anymore, to shed lights on difficult issues, uncover the truth and to provide independent and reliable information. They are at the forefront and contribute directly to the fight for justice and against impunity.

To date in 2023, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Yemen documented at least 18 cases of human rights violations against freedom of expression and the media. These included intimidation, threats, assaults, arbitrary arrests and detention, incitement against the media, and a raid of a media outlet. At least four journalists continue to be detained or are missing (Ahmed Maher, Aden; Waheed Al-Sufi, Sana'a; Nabil Al-Sadawi, Sana'a; and Muhammad Al-Muqri, Hadhramaut). Through its observatory of killed journalists and since 2011, UNESCO has condemned the killing of 40 journalists in Yemen. No killing is currently considered resolved based on the information UNESCO has received.

Women journalists in particular suffer intolerable levels of online harassment, often leading to attacks in real life.

In 2023, the observance of the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists seeks to raise awareness of the main challenges faced by journalists in the exercise of their profession, and to warn of the escalation of violence and repression against them. This year's theme also reaffirms the obligation of States to adopt effective measures to protect the independent press and strengthen institutional frameworks that combat violence and impunity, and promote media independence, sustainability and diversity.

To provide a safe and enabling environment for journalists to perform their duties, we need the authorities in Yemen to step up their monitoring of violations against journalists and media freedom, with laws that safeguard media freedom, in line with international human rights law. We need the authorities to ensure accountability and bring to justice perpetrators of crimes against journalists, through much more effective action by police and justice systems to investigate and prosecute crimes that target journalists because of their work.

The observance of the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists is also an occasion for us all to pay homage to all the journalists that gave their life, were injured, detained or threatened to ensure access to information and freedom of expression and recognize their upmost contribution to the upholding of Human Rights in Yemen.