

Item 8 – General Debate

Joint Statement on the Safety of Journalists

Md. President,

I have the honor to address the Human Rights Council on behalf of:

Algeria, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Congo, Denmark, Djibouti, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lichtenstein, Lithuania, Luxemburg Maldives, Mexico, Montenegro, Morocco, Netherlands, Nigeria, Norway, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, Slovakia, Spain, South Africa, Sweden, Switzerland, Tunisia, Turkey, United Kingdom, Uruguay

Md. President,

Journalists play a special role in society as providers of information on matters of public interest. To preserve the important role of journalists is in the interest of the society as a whole. To guarantee their safety is inextricably linked to the universal, inalienable right to freedom of expression and press freedom. Measures to limit the freedom of expression and press freedom can only be taken in strict accordance with human rights instruments.

Journalists are entitled to the same rights as any other person. Nevertheless, the exercise of their work often puts them at specific risk of intimidation, legal and physical harassment and violence. This requires our attention. We strongly condemn all human rights violations against journalists. We welcome, in this respect, the specific focus taken by two Special Rapporteurs in their reports to this Council session on the issue of safety of journalists.

Each state needs to ensure a safe and enabling environment for journalists to perform their work independently and without any interference. This applies in conflict as well as in times of peace. At the same time, this should not be interpreted as imposing any disproportionate burden on the authorities. There

is a growing threat to the safety of journalists posed by non-state actors, such as terrorist groups and criminal organizations.

Md. President,

Impunity for those responsible for human rights violations against journalists constitutes one of the biggest obstacles to the safety of journalists. There need to be swift and independent investigations in accordance with international standards into any allegations of violations. Perpetrators must be held accountable. Ending impunity would be a very effective measure to guarantee the safety of journalists in the long term. There are valuable best practices from different countries and regions on how to better address the issue of impunity. There is also an important role of the UN human rights mechanisms to provide technical support and assistance to end impunity.

More needs to be done to prevent future human rights violations against journalists. The sharing of best practices and lessons learned on the safety of journalists, taking into account lessons learned in the area of Human Rights Defenders, as well as training and awareness-raising for security services and journalists themselves can contribute to prevent future violations. At the international level there is a need to ensure better coordination and cooperation. Important work is already being undertaken by UNESCO and the OHCHR, as well as the ICRC in this respect. In addition, existing professional standards and ethics developed by journalists are designed to guide them in their work. To take a gender-based approach is important in the context of the safety of journalists.

Md. President,

In conclusion, we believe that the Human Rights Council has to play an important role in the context of ensuring the safety of journalists. There is at this moment no need for the development of new standards. We have to ensure better implementation of existing ones. There is also no need for new mechanisms. Existing ones have to be strengthened. We are committed to work towards this end.

I thank you!