

Topic 2 Synopsis

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Human Rights 1: Strengthening the freedom of the press and ensuring the safety of reporters

Due to a growing number of crimes against journalists and the rising issue of impunity, freedom of expression is under siege depriving societies and communities from correct information on issues and matters at hand. While countries like the United States widely enjoy freedom of the press with little restrictions, many countries are extremely censored isolating their citizens from the rest of the world. Such countries with these censorship include but are not limited to North Korea, Burma, Libya, Cuba, Uzbekistan, and Syria. These countries are notable for state control of all media, the existence of formal censorship regulations, the use by the state of violence, imprisonment and harassment against journalists, jamming of foreign news broadcasts, and restrictions on private Internet access.

Impunity remains one of the greatest challenges to the safety of journalists around the world. As violence against and harassment of journalists goes unpunished, the problem persists and even increases. Violence and harassment against journalists across the world have increased significantly during the past decade. There are many factors that pose threats to media workers: conflicts, civil unrest, gender-based attacks, digital harassment, natural disasters, and epidemics to name a few.

Journalists and bloggers often face harassment via digital technology. Through the continued rise of technology, it is extremely important to combat the growing threat of digital threats. As more journalists engage in digital journalism and use digital tools in their reporting and publishing, they have received increasing threats to their safety online. Journalists often abandon stories, or the profession entirely, women especially face this digital intimidation. Over the last few years, journalists have reported an increase of the categories of abuse or danger including, harassment on social media, trolling, leaked information, impeded or cut electronic communications and access. It is vital to the success of good governance and human rights worldwide. Freedom of expression, the protection of journalists, and elimination of self-censorship will encourage the spread of information, providing societies with accurate information on news and the world around them.

Resources:

<http://www.politico.com/blogs/on-media/2016/11/the-media-fears-231138>

<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/freedom-of-expression/safety-of-journalists/un-plan-of-action/>

<http://www.un.org/en/events/pressfreedomday/background.shtml>

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50755#.WDxSAKlrJSw>

<https://cpj.org/reports/2006/05/10-most-censored-countries.php>

<https://rsf.org/en/ranking>

<https://freedomhouse.org/report-types/freedom-press>

Quotes:

- “Journalists must be able to keep the public informed without fearing for their lives. A free and independent press is essential for democracy and rule of law”
- “These rights are essential for human dignity -- they are also vital for all other rights, for good governance, democracy and the rule of law, for inclusive and sustainable development”
- “I also call on all governments to strengthen the safety of journalists by ensuring that those responsible for such violence are held accountable”
- “The loss of individuals who brave danger to ensure that the world is kept informed of events in conflict zones affects to us all”
(Director-General of UNESCO)

Questions to Consider:

- What provisions does public international law make to protect journalists and to facilitate the exercise of their professional activity?
- Where should the limits of freedom of speech be set?
- How can we put an end to impunity for crimes against journalists to protect open democratic societies?

UN Involvement:

I. UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity

- result of a process that began in 2010 upon request of the Intergovernmental Council of the International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC)
- aims to creating of a free and safe environment for journalists and media workers, both in conflict and non-conflict situations, with a view to strengthening peace, democracy and development worldwide
- est. of a coordinated inter-agency mechanism to handle issues related to the safety of journalists, assisting countries to develop legislation and mechanisms favorable to freedom of expression and information, and supporting efforts to implement existing international rules and principles

II. World Press Freedom Day, May 3

- Ensuring freedom for the media around the world is a priority
- Independent, free and pluralistic media are central to good governance in democracies that are young and old
- Free media:
 - can ensure transparency, accountability and the rule of law
 - promote participation in public and political discourse
 - contribute to the fight against poverty
- Freedom of information & freedom of expression = founding principles for open and informed debate

III. Resolution 2222

- protection of journalists
- condemned all abuses and violations committed against journalists, including killings, kidnappings and hostage taking
- unconditional release of journalists taken hostage, urged government to ensure accountability for crime against media professionals
- affirmed that "United Nations peacekeeping and special political missions, where appropriate should include in their mandated reporting information on specific acts of violence against journalists, media professionals and associated personnel in situation of armed conflict."

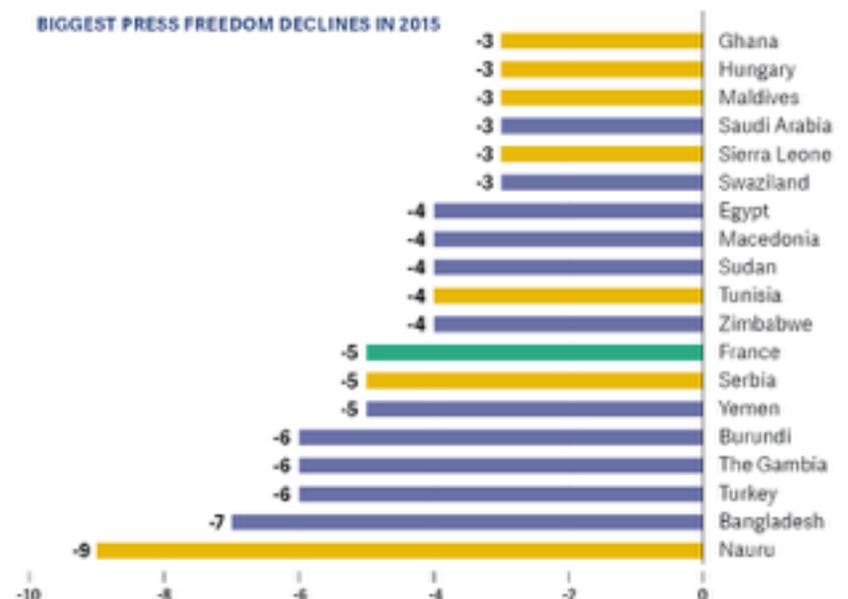




Table 3: Number of journalists killed per region

Year	Africa	Arab States	Asia & the Pacific	Europe & North America	LAC ⁷	Total
2006	3	32	21	3	11	70
2007	8	35	11	0	5	59
2008	4	12	17	9	4	46
2009	11	5	44	3	14	77
2010	8	8	25	5	19	65
2011	3	17	15	2	25	62
2012	25	51	26	1	20	123
2013	14	30	20	2	25	91
Total	76	190	179	25	123	593

