

Statement by the Media Freedom Coalition on International Day to End Impunity for Crimes Against Journalists

The International Day to End Impunity for Crimes Against Journalists was established on 2 November in 2013, drawing vital attention to the necessary protection of unrepressed journalism as a key element of freedom of opinion and expression, both online and offline.

The global death rates from, and low conviction rates for, violent crimes against journalists and media workers clearly demonstrate the current obstacles to achieving a free media globally. On this day, we pay tribute to those journalists who have been threatened, subjected to violence or killed in their line of work, including female journalists, who remain disproportionately targeted.

In nine out of ten cases, the perpetrators of violence against journalists go unpunished. UNESCO reports that 99 journalists and media workers were killed in 2018 and another 57 journalists and media workers were killed in 2019. This climate of impunity perpetuates the cycle of violence against journalists and the media. Meanwhile, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated existing threats to journalists across the globe. Many have been reporting from the front lines of this health crisis, where too many have faced censorship, intimidation or violence.

Violence against journalists and media workers comes in many forms. From harassment and intimidation to abduction, sexual and gender-based violence and from illegal arrest to murder. This professional body also faces deliberate attempts to impact its ability to work, to investigate and to report, from overly restrictive laws to censorship. Apart from killings, female journalists are also affected by gender-specific safety risks, such as sexual harassment, sexual violence and threats of violence. Yet the ability of journalists to work freely is fundamental to a functioning democracy. It allows access to reliable information and counters disinformation, misinformation and other forms of manipulation of information.

We call upon all states to advocate for a free, independent, plural and diverse media; to condemn actions that might jeopardize the safety and independence of journalists and media workers; and to hold to account those who seek to harm journalists or restrict their ability to work.

Nations from around the world will come together to address this issue at the first ministerial meeting of the Media Freedom Coalition on 16 November 2020, as part of the second Global Conference for Media Freedom.

Together, we stand committed to universal human rights and fundamental

freedoms.