



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



Safety of Journalists Covering Protests

Preserving Freedom of the Press During Times of Turmoil

Issue brief in the UNESCO series:
World Trends in Freedom of Expression and Media Development

Key trends:

- Harassment, arrests and physical violence against journalists, mostly by government security forces and sometimes by protestors, have risen in recent years.
- Press freedom and freedom of expression has been impacted in many countries by these attacks.
- A range of attacks have been identified by UNESCO in 65 countries since 2015 for this report.
- At least ten journalists have been killed since 2015 while covering protests, according to [UNESCO's Observatory of Killed Journalists](#).
- Tactics used against journalists have violated international laws and norms that have been long agreed upon under the umbrella of multilateral institutions.

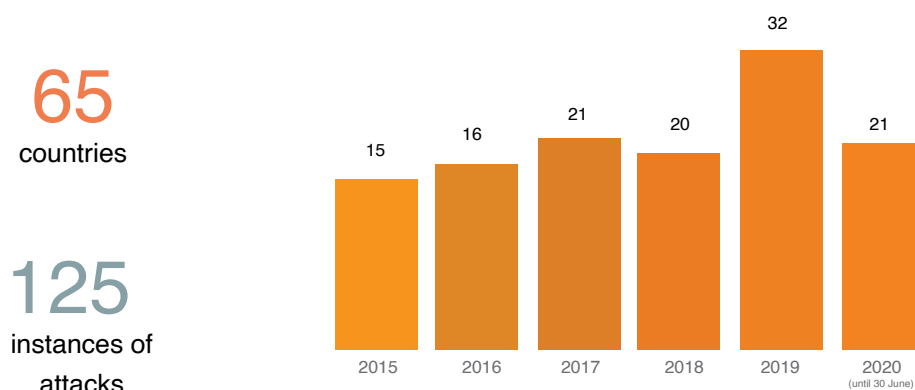
I. Reporting on Protests over Recent Years

A wave of protests has broken out in recent years across the globe. There is contestation about labelling such mass events, as can be seen in the terms “riots”, “civil unrest”, “civil disobedience”, etc., which are sometimes attributed to them. This brief uses the term “protests” as a generic to cover all these forms of mass action in the exercise of the right to association, and irrespective of whether there may be elements of violence or not. Along with these protests, there has been a notable escalation of attacks against the press.

In 2011, UNESCO’s General Conference issued a resolution requesting the Organization to monitor the status of press freedom and safety of journalists worldwide, and to report on the developments in these fields to the General Conference. Following this request, since 2014, UNESCO has produced the series on World Trends in Freedom of Expression and Media Development (World Trends Report). This issue brief is part of the World Trends Report series, which aims to provide comprehensive and data-driven evidence on global and regional trends in media freedom, pluralism, independence and safety, all examined through a gender-sensitive lens.”

Drawing on credible documentation from partners, UNESCO Field Offices and Member States, and triangulation of press reports, this report identifies 125 instances of attacks on or arrests of journalists covering protests in 65 countries between 1 January 2015 and 30 June 2020. Among these, 15 took place in 2015; 16 in 2016; 21 in 2017; 20 in 2018; 32 in 2019; and 21 in the first half of 2020 alone, clearly indicating an upward trend in the number of attacks faced by journalists when covering protests¹.

Number of instances of attacks on or arrests of journalists covering protests (1 January 2015 and 30 June 2020)



¹ **Note on methodology:** No distinction has been made here in terms of the scope and scale of these attacks. This report counts as incident/instance of attack any protests in which journalists on any level have been attacked, including when such attack(s) occurred during a series of protests over a period of days or even weeks *in the same location and about the same matter*.

These protests have been driven by a number of factors:

- Some demonstrations have been fueled by **economic conditions** including, in some cases, growing inequality and declining wages and benefits, as well as access to services.
- Others have been driven by **allegations of corruption and mismanagement** by local, regional or national authorities.
- Yet others have been responding to what protestors maintain is a pattern of **excessive force including use of deadly violence by police and other security forces** against civilians, especially minorities.
- Demonstrations in other regions have been mobilized in response to **waning political freedoms** and what protestors have identified as steps towards authoritarian rule.
- Some protests appear to be orchestrated by **people using deceptive identities and a number include agent provocateurs**, as well as criminals, who incite violent actions against persons and property.
- A number of protests represent counterdemonstrations to other protest action taking place.

The UN in several resolutions² has expressed concern at hostile rhetoric by political leaders against the press. Such incitement is often in the context of mass gatherings and creates a wider climate in which journalists are targeted at a range of events. In addition, as the [UN and the Organization of American States freedom of expression monitors noted](#) in their recent joint statement referencing declarations that characterize the media as an ‘enemy of the people’, leaders of States should avoid making statements that could “contribute to an environment of hostility and intolerance” against the press that may result in physical attacks by civilians against them.

Hundreds of journalists around the world trying to cover protests have been harassed, beaten, intimidated, arrested, put under surveillance, abducted, and had their equipment damaged. Others have been held incommunicado, humiliated, choked and fired upon with non-lethal as well as live ammunition. Since 2015, at least 10 journalists have been killed while covering protests, according to UNESCO, whose Director-General has denounced their killings.

“Journalists have a critical role in reporting and informing audiences on protest movements. For many years, UNESCO has been raising global awareness to ensure that they can do this safely and without fear of persecution, and training security forces and the judiciary on international norms in freedom of expression. The figures in this report show that much greater efforts are needed. We call on the international community and all relevant authorities to ensure that these fundamental rights are upheld.”

UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay

² See for example UN Human Rights Council Resolution 39/6 (2018) which urges “political leaders, public officials and/or authorities to refrain from denigrating, intimidating or threatening the media, including individual journalists, and thereby undermining trust in the credibility of journalists as well as respect for the importance of independent journalism

A majority of the attacks have been committed by police and security forces. Police use of non-lethal ammunition ranging from rubber bullets to pepper balls, has injured dozens of journalists, with a few having been left blinded in one eye. The introduction in a few countries of new projectiles, flash balls and butterfly bullets, each designed to produce a small charge or deploy shrapnel upon impact, has caused injury to many journalists. Dozens more have been injured, and many severely, by police firing of live rounds or bullets. Police have also arrested, beaten and in a few cases humiliated journalists, for example by forcing them to take off their shirts and roll on the ground as police beat them and asked demeaning questions.

Local government officials have doxxed³ journalists, by sharing their addresses or the names of their children while criticizing individual journalists over their coverage of protests.

Some government authorities have censored or shut down news outlets in print, broadcast media and online, or blocked websites on the Internet, along with SMS or text messaging via mobile phones. Protestors have temporarily shut down news outlets too, by occupying installations for their antennas for radio transmissions and taking them off the air. Some authorities have mandated tracking devices be put on journalists' computers, while other authorities have put journalists under either physical or electronic surveillance, or both.

In most of these cases, no matter who or which group may be responsible, impunity has continued to remain the norm in recent years for attacks on the press covering protests.

The following **ten journalists have been killed covering protests since 2015**, according to [UNESCO's Observatory of Killed Journalists](#).



[Ferzat Jarban](#), a freelance cameraman, was arrested after filming anti-government protests in al-Qasir in 2016. His severely mutilated body was found the next morning. He was the first journalist reported to have been killed in an eight-month-long crack-down on pro-democracy protests in the Syrian Arab Republic.



[Elidio Ramos Zárate](#), a reporter for daily newspaper *El Sur*, was shot in the town Juchitan de Zaragoza in Mexico's Oaxaca state in 2016 while covering protests and clashes.



[Yaser Murtaja](#) was fatally shot while he was covering Palestinian protests on the Israeli border in 2018.

³ Doxxing: the practice of obtaining and publishing private and identifiable information about individuals, usually with malicious intent.



[Ángel Eduardo Gahona](#), was shot during the live broadcast of his local television news programme *El Meridiano* on April 2018 in the east Nicaraguan town of Bluefields.



[Lyra McKee](#), a 29-year-old author and independent investigative journalist who worked for the *Mediagazer* and *BuzzFeed News* websites, was shot dead while covering clashes in 2019 in Creggan, a suburb of Londonderry (Derry) in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.



[Precious Owolabi](#) was shot dead while covering a demonstrations that gave rise to clashes between protesters and police in 2019 for *Channels Television* in Nigeria.



Journalist [Ahmed Abdul Samad](#) and cameraman [Safaa Ghali](#), were shot in 2020 while driving away from protests in the southern Iraqi city of Basra which they had been covering for Iraqi satellite television channel *Dijlah TV*.



[Alex Ogbu](#), a print and web reporter for *Regent Africa Times*, was shot dead while police dispersed a demonstration in 2020 of the Islamic Movement of Nigeria in Abuja, Nigeria.



[Ahmed Muhana Al-Lami](#), was an Iraqi a freelance news photographer. He was covering a demonstration in a public square in Bagdad on 6 December 2019 when he was hit and injured by gunshot fire that killed him shortly thereafter in hospital.

Learn more about UNESCO's monitoring of cases of killed journalists

Visit: en.unesco.org/themes/safety-journalists/observatory.

II. Applicable Domestic Law and International Law, Treaties and Norms.

A number of international treaties include language protecting freedom of expression and access to information. The most explicit of these is the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), adopted by the

United Nations General Assembly in 1966, and which entered into force in 1976. [Article 19.2](#) of this covenant reads:

Everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice.

The ICCPR also enshrines the right of peaceful assembly, as stated in [Article 21](#) of this covenant:

The right of peaceful assembly shall be recognized. No restrictions may be placed on the exercise of this right other than those imposed in conformity with the law and which are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security or public safety, public order (ordre public), the protection of public health or morals or the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.

Although these rights are proposed as the norm, provision is made in the ICCPR for exceptional limitations. To be legitimate, any limits to expression and association have to be in law, proportionate and for legitimate purpose. Many instances of restriction, however, do not match all three conditions, meaning that people's rights to expression and association are therefore violated by state actions or abused by non-state actors. Journalists' right to cover protests, whether violent or not, and to cover reactions to protests by officials or other actors, should not be unnecessarily limited through measures imposed which restrict the right to association.

Member States of international bodies are obliged to protect journalists reporting the news, including covering protests.

States also have an obligation "to investigate and punish any violation that occurs within the framework of a public demonstration" including attacks on the press, [as was noted in 2019](#) by the Office of the Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights: "[T]here is a compelling need for investigations to be carried out with due diligence and within a reasonable period of time." In 2020, the same rapporteur together with the UN Rapporteur on Freedom of Opinion and Expression [jointly noted](#) the "essential watchdog role" played by the press covering protests. "Law enforcement has the duty to ensure the safety of journalists who are covering protests and to guarantee the right of the public to seek and receive information about these social mobilisations," they said. In 2013, the rapporteurs had also issued [a joint statement](#) to ensure that journalists are not detained, threatened, attacked or restricted when covering "noteworthy events of interest to the public, such as the social protests."

There is also applicable case law from both multilateral bodies and national courts. In 2012, [the Inter-American Court of Human Rights](#) found that Colombia violated Article 13 of the American Convention on Human Rights when military officers assaulted a journalist who was covering an anti-government demonstration. In 2016, the Complaints and Compliance Committee at the [Independent Communications Authority of South Africa](#) held that an order by the South African Broadcasting Corporation to no longer broadcast footage of the destruction of public property during protests was invalid from its inception.

In 2018, the [European Court of Human Rights](#) found that a journalist's right to freedom of expression was violated when the individual concerned in the Russian Federation was sentenced to administrative detention over his attempt to photograph a protest.

Any shortcoming in upholding these obligations serves to undermine freedom of expression as well as press freedom.

III. Police and Other Security Forces' Responses to the Press during During Protests

Members of police and other security forces have been accused by UNESCO consultative NGOs of having violated Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in response to press coverage of protests since 2015 in states around the world.

In few cases have authorities taken remediating actions after government attacks on the press, or acted to address these police attacks on the press. In Armenia, in 2015, the then chief of police apologized for police actions against journalists covering demonstrations, and said that authorities would launch an investigation, and that the government would reimburse journalists for their damaged equipment. The chief of police and other members of the force were [later dismissed](#). In France, in 2018, the many attacks against the press led the French journalists' union to meet with the office of the country's president.

3.1 Use of Non-Lethal Weapons

In the period under review, security forces in a number of countries have made extensive use of non-lethal weapons against journalists as they covered protests. A non-exhaustive list of examples is provided below.



Tear gas was used by security forces in Asia, Latin America, the Middle East and North America.



Rubber bullets were repeatedly used by police in North America and Latin America, Asia, the Middle East and sub-Saharan Africa. Some security forces also used **pellets** made of rubberized or similar materials.



Pepper balls were used by security forces in North America and Europe. These are projectiles that are designed to fragment upon impact to release a chemical irritant.



Flash balls were used by security forces in Europe. Made of rubber or condensed foam that no longer emit a flash, they are relatively small caliber, high velocity impact projectiles.



Butterfly bullets were used by security forces in the Middle East. These comprise live ammunition designed to expand upon impact outside of the body to cause a flesh wound as the shrapnel spreads. Since these projectiles are made of the same material as traditional bullets, they are also more potentially lethal than any other “non-lethal” projectiles.

3.2 Use of Lethal Weapons

In addition to the 10 cases of journalists shot dead during protests that were mentioned in section I, the use of **live rounds** or lethal bullets seriously injured at least 15 journalists covering protests during the period of time covered by this brief.

3.3 Detention of Journalists

Security forces detained dozens of journalists covering protests in Asia, sub-Saharan Africa, North America, Europe, Latin America, North Africa and the Middle East. Some of these arrests were temporary and either no charges were filed, or they were dropped by authorities. In some cases, journalists were arrested individually; in other cases, a number of journalists were arrested at a time covering protests.

In North America, Europe and the Middle East, a handful of journalists were criminally charged for covering anti-government protests against police brutality and government economic policies declared illegal or unauthorized by authorities.

3.4 Signal and Digital Blocking, and Tracking and Eavesdropping Tools

Several governments have blocked news websites and cut broadcaster signals covering protests. Protestors in one country impeded coverage of their actions, too, by turning off the analogue antennas of three broadcast stations.

A state-controlled telecommunications provider required internet users including journalists to install a security certificate issued by government authorities onto their personal computers, allowing for unprecedented tracking of journalists' Internet activities.

Spyware has been introduced as well and has embedded itself onto the phones of journalists covering opposition activities including protests. Government agencies have infiltrated telephone, email and text messaging databases, enabling them to track journalists and intercept their communications.

IV. Behavior of Protestors and Other Actors toward the Press

Participants in protests in a number of cases harassed or attacked journalists covering protests. In most cases these attacks amount to far less than attacks by security forces on the press. Where more detailed information is available, for instance in the United States of America, the assessment is that more than **82 percent** of attacks on the press between 26 May and 3 June were alleged to have been committed by law enforcement agents⁴.

4.1 Harassment of Journalists and News Crews

Participants in protests, as well as security force members, have harassed journalists including by physically stopping them from reporting, as well as by damaging their equipment, and by briefly detaining journalists.

4.2 Violent Attacks against the Press

Participants in protests have violently attacked journalists in a number of regions. In one case, such people set fire to the offices of news outlets, and, in another, allegedly planted ammunition in a journalist's bag to be found by police.

⁴ According to the U.S. Press Freedom Tracker, which brings together more than two dozen press freedom groups to create a centralized repository for research. The Tracker is based on a coalition that shares knowledge about threats to press freedom across the country. Freedom of the Press Foundation, a press freedom advocacy organization, manages the day-to-day operations of the site. The Committee to Protect Journalists chairs an advisory board that includes the Knight First Amendment Institute at Columbia University, the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press, Reporters Without Borders, and Index on Censorship.

V. Gender and Diversity Factors in Safety of Journalists during Protests

Various instances of women journalists being the victims of violence at the hands of security forces or protesters because of their profession have been recorded in recent years. In some of the worst cases, women journalists were deliberately targeted and attacked because of their gender. In one case, a female journalist reported her car was surrounded by protesters who threatened to rape her during a “Yellow Vests” protest. In another, two women journalists along with a male colleague, were arrested by security forces despite having shown their credentials, on the pretext they had violated a curfew order. Following their arrest, the two women journalists were reportedly made to undress completely and were humiliated by the officers who today face a sexual violence complaint. In another case, a woman journalist was assaulted while covering a demonstration by protesters, who proceeded to beat her and rip off her clothes.

These examples serve to highlight that, while experiencing the same kinds of physical violence as their male counterparts, women media workers are also more highly exposed to the threats of sexual violence and rape. The threat or carrying out of sexual assault against women was highlighted in 2011, when several female reporters were assaulted while covering protests on Tahrir Square in Egypt. Furthermore, according to a survey conducted by the International Women’s Media Foundation and the International News Safety Institute in 2013, 40 out of 154 respondents (26%) reported that they had experienced physical violence while covering protests, rallies and other public events.

Waves of Black Lives Matter protests following the killing of George Floyd have also underscored the unique burdens carried by black journalists and journalists of color and the discrimination that they face in the exercise of their profession. A notable example was the arrest of an Afro-Latino CNN reporter, who was arrested live on air while his white colleagues were allowed to continue reporting, and who stated they had been treated “much differently”.

VI. Good Practices

There are a number of good practices that all parties involved in matters of civil unrest should follow:

6.1 Legal Frameworks for Police and Other Security Forces

The legal frameworks regulating when and how police and security forces use force during protests including against journalists is weaker in a number of Member States than international standards and laws would suggest. The United Nations High Commissioner on Human Rights [in 2020 noted](#): “To avoid the need to resort to lethal force, States must supply law enforcement officials with effective, less-lethal means, and train them in their lawful use. In some cases, unfortunately, law enforcement officials use less-lethal weapons improperly, leading to serious injury or even death.”

The above comment was made in response to recent protests in the United States of America. “[T]he U.S. legal framework for police use of force does not comply with the international standards of necessity and proportionality,” also [wrote Agnes Callamard](#), the UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions. “It is governed instead by the principle of reasonableness and the doctrine of qualified immunity.”

In Colombia, after lengthy proceedings involving Colombian National Army’s attacks against a journalist over his filming of soldiers beating protestors during a demonstration, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights mandated [in September 2012](#) that the Colombian Armed Forces must have freedom of expression training. The Court stated: “this Court finds it important that the State continue to enhance its institutional capacities by training the members of the Armed Forces in order to avoid the repetition of acts such as those that occurred in this case. To this end, the State must incorporate into its human rights education programs for the Armed Forces, a specific module on the protection of the right to freedom of thought and expression and on [the work of journalists and social communicators](#).” Colombia has also now [a complex protection mechanism structure](#) involving multiple government agencies and civil society groups. This protection can range from the provision of bodyguards, armed agents who stay with the journalist 24 hours a day, to the use of armoured vehicles for transportation.

In Brazil, following testimony of attacks on the press during protests, the São Paulo Public Ministry [sent recommendations](#) to the Military Police command to “regulate the performance of military police officers in the face of press

professionals and communicators in general, in order to ensure that the Corporation's performance is aimed at protecting those professionals." The recommendations further called for "administrative accountability, for action or omission, in cases involving assaults or violent acts against media professionals and communicators in general", in addition to the "adoption of continuous troop training activities regarding the intangibility of professionals press in demonstrations, with specific training." These recommendations addressed to the police were prepared by the São Paulo State Attorney general and give guidelines to follow in order to preserve the work of journalists during protests.

6.2 Police Training

Police actions and behavior toward the press covering protests over the past four and a half years around much of the world demonstrates the importance of providing appropriate police training.

Since 2013, UNESCO and its partners have been implementing training programmes for security forces on freedom of expression. The standard format of these courses is a three-day course for officers, which includes one day in common with journalists. More than 3,400 security forces have been trained in over 17 countries including [Burkina Faso](#), [Colombia](#), [Côte d'Ivoire](#), [the Gambia](#), [Iraq](#), [Libya](#), [Madagascar](#), [Mali](#), [Palestine](#), [Rwanda](#), [Senegal](#), [Somalia](#), [South Sudan](#), [United Republic of Tanzania](#), [Tunisia](#), [Ukraine](#) and [Uzbekistan](#).



The goal of these workshops is to train security forces to uphold citizens' rights to freedom of expression, to better understand the role and function of journalists in democratic societies and to establish professional working relationships between the two groups. Security forces can play an enabling role in situations of political and institutional change toward democratic societies, post-conflict situations as well as countries experiencing high levels of violence or instability.

These trainings include an important dialogue component between law enforcement officers and journalists, which in many countries was the first occasion where both groups had the opportunity to meet and express their concerns. These open dialogues between officers and journalists have helped them build a common ground of understanding and fostered more professional

and respectful relations. In particular, in 2013, the training in Tunisia became part of the in-service curriculum of the National Guard Training Institute, and in 2017 the Peacekeeping School in Mali (*Ecole de Maintien de la Paix-EMP*), which trains officers from Mali and the sub-region, officially adopted the UNESCO curriculum on training security forces on freedom of expression and safety of journalists.

The outcome of many of these trainings has been to develop standard operating procedures, protocols and institutional arrangements for how both security forces and journalists can do their jobs during protests, with due respect to the roles of each in society.

6.3 Protest Groups and Respect for the Press

Participants in protests have violated press freedom in a number of countries. Civil society groups should help make protestors aware that respecting the press during protests is a good practice. One that helps assure that journalists are able to assume a “watchdog” role to protect everyone on the scene, including protestors and bystanders from over-reaction by members of the security forces.

6.4 Good Practices on the Part of the Press

Good practices for journalists include a number of steps:

- Journalists should wear clothing and press credentials to visibly distinguish themselves from either protestors or police.
- Journalists should act consistently with their roles as professional observers, and they should avoid participating on any side during protests in any manner. Journalists and their employers should ensure that journalists have proper safety gear, training and support when covering protests.
- Journalists should also consider forming groups or joining existing ones dedicated to monitoring and upholding press freedom in their own countries, including in times of protests.
- National or regional press freedom or other journalist groups can provide a professional response from the community of journalists whenever their colleagues are harassed, detained or attacked. Groups including the Brazilian Association of Investigative Journalism (ABRAJI), Red Rompe El Miedo (Break the Fear Network) in Mexico, and Arab Reporters for Investigative Journalism (ARIJ) based in Jordan, are only a few examples of such groups. By working together, these local journalism groups have been able to promote safety practices by employers as well as journalists when covering protests.

VII. Recommendations

A number of steps can be considered by states and multilateral bodies as well as, in some cases, for civil society groups to also play in role, to curb attacks on the press and to help ensure the free flow of news and information.

7.1 Freedom of Expression and Public Order Training

Police actions against the press in many nations underscores the need for more public dialogue on the intersection between freedom of expression including press freedom and the need for public order. One goal might be to help bridge the gap between journalists and security forces. The UNESCO manual [“Freedom of Expression and Public Order: Training Manual”](#) (available in Arabic, English, French and Indonesian) offers a comprehensive program for training of security forces on freedom of expression. It presents the international framework regarding freedom of expression, examples of standards operating procedures and good practices. The manual further discusses the importance of promoting transparency, facilitating relations between security forces and the media, and strengthening safety of journalists.

The gap between journalists and security forces could be further bridged by states incorporating these operating procedures and good practices into the police curriculum and training, and by making them a part of preparing police to maintain order during protests.

7.2 Police Training

Police actions against the press in many nations highlight the need for more police training that includes:

- Discussion about the role of journalists in covering protests.
- Instruction in the proper use of non-lethal weapons including firing down at the ground so that rubberized and other projectiles do not hit journalists and others by direct fire, especially at close range.
- Distinguishing between protestors and the press.
- Other guidance for maintaining order during protests while respecting the roles of journalists who are covering it.

7.3 Journalist Training

The high degree of injuries along with a number of fatalities of journalists covering protests raises the need for more safety training for journalists. The James W. Foley Legacy Foundation is one of many groups that offers updated [journalism security curriculum modules](#). The Brazilian Association of Investigative Journalism offers a [Security Manual for Covering Protests](#). Non-governmental groups like the Steven Sotloff Memorial 2Lives Foundation and the ACOS Alliance (A Culture of Safety) each also help provide [hostile environments training](#) for journalists, especially freelancers, [covering civil unrest](#). These are only a few of many groups that offer such training and support to journalists.

7.4 Article 19 of the ICCPR in Theory and Practice

It is one thing to express support for press freedom and freedom of expression, and it is another to put those principles into practice. The wave of protests around the world in recent years demonstrates the importance of freedom of expression within and across societies. The many reports of violations of these values by police, and to a much lesser degree, participants in protests shows many states still have a long way to go.

A number of steps are recommended.

- Media outlets and employers should pay attention to safety measures including providing appropriate training and equipment to journalists when sending them to cover protests, and they should provide the same resources to freelance journalists when making use of the reports that they provide.
- Multilateral bodies like UNESCO should continue to invest resources in training police and other authorities on freedom of expression and press freedom related to situations of protest. This training should include the role of the press in informing the public when reporting on situations of protest. It should also address how police can handle journalists covering protests, including discerning between protestors and the press, and appropriate versus inappropriate tactics to be used when dealing with the press.
- Media outlets, civil society groups and multilateral bodies like UNESCO should continue to invest resources to provide



appropriate training to journalists on how to safely cover situations. This training should include interactions with police as well as protestors, safety guidelines in reporting on fluid and dangerous situations, resiliency training to handle stress before, during and after, and first aid so that journalists can treat each other as needed.

- National authorities should consider appointing an ombudsman with responsibility for the treatment by police and other security forces of the press during situations. This will ensure the appointment of an official to monitor and help curb police attacks on the press while reporting on protests.
- The same ombudsman or similar figure should also be authorized to make recommendations for investigation, and as needed, prosecution for government as well as civilian attacks on the press.
- Donors and international bodies should continue to invest resources into developing and strengthening national mechanisms for the protection of journalists. UNESCO, with support from the Dutch government, has already supported national initiatives along these lines in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Pakistan, in addition to jointly supporting regional initiatives toward establishing such mechanisms in Latin America and East Africa.



Multi-Donor Programme on Freedom of Expression and Safety of Journalists

About this brief

This brief comes as part of the UNESCO series [World Trends in Freedom of Expression and Media Development](#). It examines turmoil and issues of safety for journalists worldwide over the past four and a half years, from 1 January 2015 through 30 June 2020. The brief is designed to serve as a reference for UNESCO Member States, media organizations, NGOs, academia and internet companies. The content was developed by Frank Smyth and UNESCO acknowledges the contributions by the Ethical Journalism Network, in particular its Director Hannah Storm, and the International News Safety Institute.

The font used in the title is “Facts”, a font specially developed for the 2020 celebration of World Press Freedom Day. Download it [here](#).

For more resources, visit: [World Trends in Freedom of Expression and Media Development](#).

About the author

Frank Smyth is an independent journalist, and a specialist in journalist security and press freedom. He has testified before the U.S. Congress and the Member States of the Organization of American States, the UN Human Rights Council, and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Frank is founder and CEO of GJS, a leading hostile environments training firm.



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Ethical
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The Ethical Journalism Network is a UK based charity and coalition of media practitioners aimed at strengthening the craft of journalism and promoting for the public benefit high ethical standards in journalism.

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