

**Forum:** Human Rights Council

**Student Officers:** MinSeo Kang, Nguyen Khoa Duc, Beomjoon Park

**Be sure to consult the [UNIS MUN LibGuide](#) for additional resources.**

## **TOPIC 2: The question of protecting freedom of the press for journalists.**

### **I. Introduction to the Topic**

Over the last two decades, 1668 journalists have been killed because of their job, averaging to 80 journalists per year. Furthermore, regions such as Asia, Europe, and South America are shown to have more hostility to journalists as shown by the World Press Freedom Index. Meanwhile currently, in 2022, the number of jailed journalists reached higher than ever, with countries such as Iran, China, Myanmar, Turkey, Belarus as main contributors towards this statistic.

This rise in violence against journalists is due to their massive influence in today's digital age, where information can be easily accessed and spread in an instant. Journalists over the years have exercised their right to freedom of press, the right for the publication of media such as newspaper, magazines, and more without governmental restriction (unless it is under libel, obscenity, sedition), as communicators between the public and the government. This communication allows the public to know what the government is, from their flaws and to what they are doing correctly. However, when this communication is suppressed and controlled by the government, this leads to consequences that threaten democracy. An example of this would be governments being able to get away with atrocities without being condemned by their citizens such as China.

It is crucial that in the future, as delegates discuss the solutions towards the protection of the freedom of the press, to also consider the following issues.

For example, though journalists are being killed, journalists are being killed both in the warzones such as in current conflicts such the Ukraine-Russo War. For example, since 2014 there have been 668 killed journalists, and 335 of those deaths being attributed to death within warfare and conflicts. This raises the question towards the protection and preventative measures for journalists within warfare. Therefore delegates should consider solutions that address this problem, and help create a safer environment for journalists to report on wars.

Furthermore, another aspect of this issue that delegates should consider is the rise of deaths within countries that are not in war. In the past two decades, more journalists have been murdered within countries that are currently not in war due to the journalists investigating organised crime and corruption. To be more specific, in 2022, America has contributed to 47.4% of the murdered journalists in that year, which includes Mexico, Brazil, Columbia, and Honduras, of which those countries were listed in the 15 most dangerous countries for the press. All of these countries are currently not at war, and despite this, these countries have contributed to more than 80% of the murdered journalists in this region within a decade. Realising this fact, delegates may not only want to look into providing solutions to create a safe environment for journalists within countries not in war (i.e easier access to governmental protection), but also within specific regions of the world as well such as America due to their consistent history to show great hostility towards journalists.

Finally delegates may also want to address the death of female journalists as well. Although males have contributed to a large majority of the killed journalists, spikes of female journalists being killed have been seen after 2012. And a majority of these female journalists that were killed were also investigating women's rights. Therefore delegates should consider this side of issue as well as not only are journalists being killed investigating organised crime, politics, corruption, etc but also towards women's rights due to the new spikes in female journalists murdered.

## II. Definition of Key Terms & Concepts

### Definition of Key Terms

**Freedom of the Press:** The right for the publication of media such as newspaper, magazines, and more without governmental restriction unless it is under libel, obscenity, sedition, etc. This is relevant to the topic as this right is what is being discussed for this topic (the protection of the freedom of the press)

**Journalism:** The occupation of reporting, writing, editing, photographing, or broadcasting news or of conducting any news organisation as a business. This is relevant to the topic as individuals under this occupation are the main target of the rising persecution of the freedom of the press.

**Censorship:** the suppression or prohibition of any parts of books, films, news, etc. that are considered obscene, politically unacceptable, or a threat to security. This is relevant to the topic as this is how the freedom of the press is being threatened, and why many governments and individuals seek to limit journalism and the freedom of the press.

**Impunity:** exemption from punishment or freedom from the injurious consequences of an action. This is relevant to the topic as impunity is a major reason why the press freedom is being threatened as murderers of journalists and press freedom violators go unpunished and are allowed to continue to attack journalists.

**Libel:** The act or crime of publishing or broadcasting a defamatory statement. This is relevant to the topic as a government can have many reasons to censor information from journalists, which includes times where it is legal such as libel. Therefore this is relevant to the topic as governments use this as justification for censorship and the suppression of the freedom of the press.

**Sedition:** Incitement of discontent or rebellion against a government. This is relevant to the topic as a government can have many reasons to censor information from journalists, which includes times where it

is legal such as libel. Therefore this is relevant to the topic as governments use this as justification for censorship and the suppression of the freedom of the press.

### III. Key Stakeholders

**Reporters Without Borders (RSF):** Reporters Without Borders (RSF), is a non-profit and non-governmental organization that seeks press freedom. They are a major stakeholder as their organization has made major contributions towards said goal. For example, in 2002, they created the Press Freedom World Index, which has been instrumental in determining where the issue of press freedom is most prevalent and where it is developing.

**Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ):** The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), is also another non-profit organization and non-governmental organization that originated from the United States. The organization is a major stakeholder in this issue due to how they have also made major contribution towards press freedom. For instance, the CPJ compiles a database where they document violations of the press freedom (i.e murders on journalists) whilst also providing protection and security for journalists internationally. With their influence reaching across all regions, the scale and impact that this organization can make to help support journalists and denounce press freedom violations makes the CPJ a major stakeholder in this issue.

**Asia:** Asia has an important significance towards this issue due to every country except for South Korea and Taiwan being ranked as “problematic” to “serious” on the problems regarding violence against journalists. Furthermore, countries such as Russia and China have been becoming increasingly involved in this issue due to China’s strict censorship and Russia’s censorship towards the Ukraine-Russia war. Meanwhile other countries such as Afghanistan and Myanmar have become increasingly more hostile towards journalists due to warfare from their conflicts. Overall, many countries within this region are considered problematic and do not uphold the protection of the freedom of the press to an international standard, and therefore have significant stakeholder in this issue.

**European Union (EU):** The European Union is increasingly becoming involved in this issue as many countries under its membership have been becoming increasingly more hostile towards journalists. This includes most of the countries within East of Europe, with some countries having contributed significantly like Turkey and Belarus towards the record of jailed journalists being broken this year.

Furthermore, countries such as Ukraine have also become increasingly hostile towards journalists due to the warfare due to its conflict with Russia.

**UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization):** In April of 2012, the UN Plan of Action was launched and endorsed by UNESCO, along with other organs of the UN such as OHCHR to create a safe and free environment for journalists across the globe. This plan was accomplished in many ways such as raising awareness and promoting cooperation between the UN and intergovernmental organisations, national governments, civil society groups, media companies, professional associations and academia. Since then, many more laws and resolutions have been created that helped protect journalism and the freedom of the press. Consequently this makes UNESCO a key stakeholder in this issue due to the impact of the Plan of Action as UNESCO played a large role in sustaining the plan.

**Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR): Relevance & significance:** For the same reasons as UNESCO, in April of 2012, the UN Plan of Action was launched and alongside UNESCO, OHCHR played a large role in implementing and strengthening this plan. Recently, in 2017 the OHCHR and UNESCO held a conference (Multi-stakeholder Consultation) which had 250 representatives from various UN agencies, Member States, intergovernmental organisations, etc.

#### **IV. Key Issues including Background Information**

##### **Murdered journalists within countries at war:**

In recent times, many conflicts have arisen, with many most notable such as Russia-Ukraine. And with this rise in conflicts, countries that are currently at war have posed a threat towards the freedom of the press as they are facilitating a deadly environment towards journalists. As a result, many journalists have perished within their line of work inside these warring countries. Furthermore, journalists have been killed and suppressed in countries at war such as within Russia, where they controlled the media as propaganda and spread false information to justify their war against Ukraine.

##### **The rise of murdered journalists within countries at peace:**

In addition to murdered journalists within countries at war, more journalists were murdered within countries at peace such as within America, which despite not having any current wars, has contributed to

47.4% of all killed journalists in 2022. Many of these journalists were killed due to their work that investigated organised crime, politics, and corruption. This presents the issue of governments abusing the freedom of the press to hide and suppress information (i.e China) to get away with their abuse of power. Meanwhile other countries, even not in war, are having their journalists killed due to organised crime and their lack of governmental protection. Furthermore the rise of impunity against the violators of press freedom continues to rise (with 80% in the past decade) which has been a major reason why journalists are being put in more danger despite the countries being at peace.

### The rise of murdered female journalists:

Despite most of the deaths of murdered journalists being male, there has been a trend towards higher deaths for female journalists in the past decade. Many of these murdered female journalists were also investigating women's rights as their work. And as women's rights movements continue to progress and develop, more female journalists will continue to be endangered in their line of work as well.

## V. Timeline of Resolutions, Treaties, and Events

### Timeline of Resolutions, Treaties, and Events

Date	Description of event
1948	UN - The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is approved and this is important as Articles 18 and 19 which includes the freedom of thought (18) and freedom of opinion and expression. These rights are important due to how essential they are for the freedom of the press and the protection of journalists from prosecution for their jobs.
1985	Reporters Without Borders, a non-profit/non-governmental organization was established during this time in Montpellier, France. The goal of this organization is to protect the freedom of the press across the globe. This organization became important later on as this organization created the Press Freedom Index, a tool that is instrumental in determining a country's hostility towards journalists and how much it upholds the freedom of the press.
1997	UNESCO Resolution 29 on the Condemnation of Violence against Journalists adopted during the 29th General Conference

- 2002 Reporters Without Borders creates the Press Freedom Index, which as elaborated earlier becomes an instrumental tool in determining the safety of journalists within countries across the world. As a result, organizations such as the UN, RSF, and other non-profits/non-governmental groups are able to more accurately identify trends that indicate the rise of violence against journalists but see where the issue is the most problematic within regions (i.e South America).
- 2005 In the 2005 World Summit Document paragraphs 138 and 139, it stated that each individual state has the responsibility to protect their populations from crimes against humanity such as genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, etc. Furthermore, fellow states of the international community are encouraged to help aid other states in upholding this responsibility. This responsibility should be done through diplomatic, humanitarian, and peaceful means to protect the international population from said crimes against humanity. This becomes important to the topic as within crimes against humanity includes human rights violations that include the right to a free press. This encourages countries to notify their population from the looming threat of the attacks against the free press but also encourages other nation-states to assist other states to help protect their population (i.e journalists) and the freedom of the press.  
The first UN Inter-Agency Meeting on this issue, convened by the Director-General of UNESCO at the request of the IPDC Intergovernmental Council, sees the preparation of the UN Plan of Action.
- 2011 The beginning of the UN Plan of Action which was approved and created due to the rising dangers against the freedom of the press and journalism (which consequently held the first UN Inter-Agency Meeting on said issue for the preparation of this plan). The UN Plan of Action is a plan conceived by the UN to fight violence against journalists and protect the freedom of the press through several ways but limited to: spreading awareness through media about this rising issue, develop tools to measure the safety of journalists, and assist countries to implement policies to protect the freedom of the press and journalists.  
After the deaths of two French journalists on November 2nd, 2013, the UN proclaimed November 2nd as International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists as a response to spread awareness on the rising problems regarding journalism and the freedom of the press.
- 2013
- 2018 UNESCO Resolution 52 on Major Programme V - Communication and Information was approved. Delegates should refer to this resolution as they write their own resolution as it provides a basis for what a resolution for the issue on the safety of journalists should be like.

- 2018 Human Rights Council Resolution (A/HRC/RES/39/6) on the Safety of Journalists. Delegates should refer to this resolution as they write their own resolution as it provides a basis for what a resolution on the safety of journalists should be like.
- 2019 UNESCO Resolution 52 on Major Programme V - Communication and Information. Delegates should refer to this resolution as they write their own resolution as it provides a basis for what a resolution for the issue on the safety of journalists should be like.
- 2022 UNESCO publishes their 2022 report on the safety of journalists and the danger of impunity. This report summarizes and writes about the trends that have been seen during the previous years through the collection of data. Key trends that have been observed from this include how journalists are now more endangered in countries not at war, an increase in women journalists killed, and journalists are getting more killed while covering protests. Delegates should refer to this report when developing their resolution as it highlights specific issues within the freedom of the press in recent years.
- 2022 CPJ publishes their 2022 Global Impunity Index, which finds that in the past decade, 80% of the murderers that killed journalists were not held accountable for their actions. This report identified that most governments were not interested in fighting for press freedom. This report further shows which countries are currently suffering the most from impunity against the murders in the last 10 years. These countries would be Somalia, Iraq, Brazil, Syria, Mexico, Pakistan, South Sudan, Philippines, India, and Myanmar. Additionally, the report also establishes records of countries that state their history against press freedom (i.e violations through murder or imprisonment of journalists in the past).

## VI. Possible Challenges & Solutions

**Key Issue 1:** As warfare continues to endanger more journalists as they investigate within warring countries such as Ukraine and Russia, delegates may want to consider these perspectives. For example, the freedom of the press is being threatened in many of these warring countries due to lack of protective and preventive measures to protect journalists from warfare. Delegates may want to consider having these countries at war be open to non-profit and non-governmental organisations aid journalists and provide a safer environment for journalists to report, even in the midst of warfare. Furthermore, other countries not involved in warfare may want to help combat the suppression of the freedom of speech, as it can benefit them as well. For example, European countries may want to combat Russia's suppression of the media, as

the propaganda wrongly justifies and motivates citizens in Russia to fight in the war, which continues to prolong the Ukraine-Russo war. And as that conflict is stretched, the grain shortages and energy shortages will continue to wreak havoc in Europe but also the rest of the world as well. Therefore it would be in the mutual interest of the European countries to assist in creating solutions for this specific problem

**Key Issue 2:** As the trend towards journalists being killed in countries at peace only continues to grow, delegates may want to consider the following perspectives to solve this issue. Many journalists in regions such as South America are suffering from murders due their research into organised crime. Therefore, countries such as the United States, that suffer from Mexico's drug cartels and their smuggling might want to assist journalists in these regions to provide better transparency and help combat not only organised crime there but also the lack of freedom of press. Furthermore, the cause of many of these deaths of journalists within these regions is also due to the lack of governmental protection. Therefore delegates may want to include non-profit organisations and non-governmental organisations such RSWF (Reporters Without Borders) to help provide aid but also consider adding policy changes so that journalists can more easily receive government protection to facilitate a friendlier environment for the press and help combat this current issue.

**Key Issue 3:** As women's rights movements continue to grow in influence, more dangers continue to rise for female journalists as well. Due to many of the recent spikes of murdered women journalists caused by their reports on women's rights, delegates may want to consider having NGOs in women's rights and journalism help combat this rising issue. Doing this will allow not only a friendlier environment for journalism but also women's rights as well. Furthermore, Human Rights Council also includes SDGS (sustainable development goals) such as gender equality, delegates many want to consider using past resolutions on women's rights for this resolution as this issue not only concerns journalism but also women's rights as well due to the voices of this movement being suppressed through journalists such as female journalists who report on women's rights.

## **VII. Recommendations for Resolution Writing including Research**

As delegates write their resolutions on this issue, delegates are recommended to heavily use the resources provided in this chair report, especially resources such as the World Press Freedom Index. This is because resources like the World Press Freedom Index will be able to provide delegates a better understanding of their country's stance, view, and background on this issue. Furthermore, for delegates with countries that are considered hostile towards journalists (i.e countries with high World Press



Freedom Index values), take into account your government's stance and how they are affecting the freedom of the press in their countries. For example, for countries such as China and Mexico, they would not be too lenient towards making policy changes that would support journalists. Other countries like Ukraine whose country is considered hostile towards journalists but is mostly due to warfare would likely be more lenient towards helping journalists. In other words, delegates should take into account context in addition to research when developing their stances/resolutions.

Additionally, delegates should refer to previous resolutions that have been adopted (i.e those in the timelines) but also note that these resolutions were a minor portion of the overall resolutions that have been adopted in this issue. And in addition to previous resolutions, delegates should also take advantage of the UNESCO reports on the safety of journalists and the dangers of impunity. This report, as stated earlier will provide information regarding recent trends and issues that have arisen in recent times.

### VIII. Bibliography

“1,668 Journalists Killed in Past 20 Years (2003-2022), Average of 80 per Year.” *RSF*, RSF,  
<https://rsf.org/en/1668-journalists-killed-past-20-years-2003-2022-average-80-year>.

“2011-2020: A Study of Journalist Murders in Latin America Confirms the Importance of Strengthening Protection Policies.” *RSF*,  
<https://rsf.org/en/2011-2020-study-journalist-murders-latin-america-confirms-importance-strengthening-protection>.

“Basic Texts Related to the Safety of Journalists.” *UNESCO.org*,  
<https://www.unesco.org/en/safety-journalists/basic-texts>.

“Europe's Duty to Save Journalists - Commissioner for Human Rights - Publi.coe.int.” *Commissioner for Human Rights*, Council of Europe, 26 Apr. 2018,  
[https://www.coe.int/en/web/commissioner/-/europe-s-duty-to-save-journalists?inheritRedirect=true&redirect=%2Fen%2Fweb%2Fcommissioner%2Fopinion-articles%3Fp\\_p\\_id%3D101\\_INSTANCE\\_qk0cwIowET3l%26p\\_p\\_lifecycle%3D0%26p\\_p\\_state%3Dnormal%26p\\_p\\_mode%3Dview%26p\\_p\\_col\\_id%3Dcolumn-1%26p\\_p\\_col\\_count%3D1%26\\_101\\_INSTANCE\\_qk0cwIowET3l\\_delta%3D20%26\\_101\\_INSTANCE\\_qk0cwIowET3l\\_keywords%3D%26\\_101\\_INSTANCE\\_qk0cwIowET3l\\_advancedSearch%3Dfalse%26\\_101\\_INSTANCE\\_qk0cwIowET3l\\_andOperator%3Dtrue%26p\\_r\\_p\\_564233524\\_resetCur%3Dfalse%26\\_101\\_INSTANCE\\_qk0cwIowET3l\\_cur%3D2](https://www.coe.int/en/web/commissioner/-/europe-s-duty-to-save-journalists?inheritRedirect=true&redirect=%2Fen%2Fweb%2Fcommissioner%2Fopinion-articles%3Fp_p_id%3D101_INSTANCE_qk0cwIowET3l%26p_p_lifecycle%3D0%26p_p_state%3Dnormal%26p_p_mode%3Dview%26p_p_col_id%3Dcolumn-1%26p_p_col_count%3D1%26_101_INSTANCE_qk0cwIowET3l_delta%3D20%26_101_INSTANCE_qk0cwIowET3l_keywords%3D%26_101_INSTANCE_qk0cwIowET3l_advancedSearch%3Dfalse%26_101_INSTANCE_qk0cwIowET3l_andOperator%3Dtrue%26p_r_p_564233524_resetCur%3Dfalse%26_101_INSTANCE_qk0cwIowET3l_cur%3D2).

“International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists.” *United Nations*, United Nations, <https://www.un.org/en/observances/end-impunity-crimes-against-journalists>.

“Knowing the Truth Is Protecting the Truth.” *UNESCO.org*, 2022, <https://www.unesco.org/reports/safety-journalists/2022/en>.

“Media Freedom.” *Freedom House*, Freedom House, <https://freedomhouse.org/issues/media-freedom>.

Ochab, Dr. Ewelina U. “Protecting Journalists Is Protecting Freedom of Expression for All.” *Forbes*, Forbes Magazine, 7 Nov. 2022, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/ewelinaochab/2022/11/05/protecting-journalists-is-protecting-freedom-of-expression-for-all/>.

“Press Freedom.” *Our World in Data*, 2021, <https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/press-freedom-rsf>.

Unesco. “UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity.” *UNESCO.org*, UNESCO, 1 Jan. 1970, <https://www.unesco.org/en/safety-journalists/un-plan-action>.

United Nations. (2020). *United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the responsibility to protect*. United Nations. Retrieved January 17, 2023, from <https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/about-responsibility-to-protect.shtml#:~:text=138.,through%20appropriate%20and%20necessary%20means>.

“What Is the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity? - World.” *ReliefWeb*, 27 Oct. 2017, <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/what-un-plan-action-safety-journalists-and-issue-impunity>.

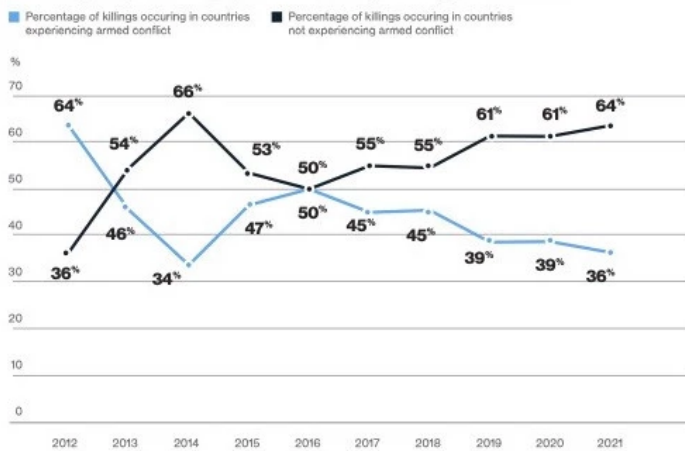
## IX: Additional Resources



This graph (from the 2022 UNESCO report), informs the increase in women journalists killed compared to the year of 2021.

**FIGURE 5:**

Percentage of journalist killings in countries experiencing armed conflict



This graph (from the 2022 UNESCO report), informs about the increase in the trend of journalists being killed in countries not experiencing armed conflict rather than countries that are.