



July 15, 2013

**To all members of the UN Security Council
Re: Recommendations on the Protection of Journalists**

Excellencies,

We, the undersigned organizations, welcome the upcoming 17 July 2013 debate on the Protection of Journalists and thank the Council for its attention to this pressing issue. As organizations that work with and for journalists and human rights defenders, we hope that you will include the following four points in your oral intervention during the 17 July debate.

Firstly, we ask that Council recognize and bring attention to the fact that **journalists and human rights defenders are particularly vulnerable targets of violence during situations of armed conflict**, and worthy of special attention and protection. In situations of active hostilities and armed conflict, much attention is paid to mass loss of life and humanitarian crises. Action and response to these issues is essential, but attention and protection must also be given to the individuals who risk their lives in the name of truth, justice, and human rights. As recognized by the Secretary-General's 22 May 2012 Report on the Protection of Civilians In Armed Conflict, "journalists play a crucial role by reporting on the treatment and suffering endured by civilians in situations of conflict and on violations of humanitarian law and human rights." (S/2012/376 paragraph 14). This makes journalists the target of attacks by parties to the conflict who do not want their actions exposed, putting journalists at even greater risk. **By reporting on cases of international concern, journalists provide an invaluable service to the work of the United Nations and especially the Security Council, and thus deserve special attention and protection from these bodies.**

In addition to attacks directly against journalists, we are seeing an **alarming trend in which NGOs that work to promote press freedom and the protection of journalists are now being targeted** as well. Repressive governments that want to silence journalists have increasingly sought to shut down organizations that promote free press and support

journalists. This has been done through the **prosecution of media NGO workers, passage of laws restricting the work and funding of NGOs, false charges of tax evasion, and other means of physical and legal intimidation**. One example of this trend is the recent case in Egypt in which 43 NGO workers, including five working for the International Center for Journalists (ICFJ), were convicted of failing to follow Egypt's laws on NGO registration and funding, and sentenced to prison. ICFJ had followed the law in seeking registration and had never been told to suspend its activities before the prosecution of its staff, and this case was widely denounced by Egyptian and international organizations that work to promote democracy and human rights. We have seen similar repression of NGOs working with and for journalists in other countries. In Belarus, for example, the government has ordered the Belarusian Association of Journalists (BAJ) to halt its legal assistance work on behalf of local journalists and has imposed a ban on BAJ leaders leaving the country. By attacking media development and freedom of expression NGOs, repressive governments are trying to ensure that journalists have less protection and support, leaving them more vulnerable. **If the international community wishes to ensure the protection of journalists and freedom of expression, it is vital that they also ensure the respect for organizations working towards these same goals** around the world.

There is also a need to recognize that **the protection of journalists and freedom of expression cannot be limited to situations of armed conflict**. As the Director General of the Intergovernmental Council of the IPDC outlined in the 27 March 2012 report on The Safety of Journalists and the Danger of Impunity, "the majority of attacks [against journalists] did not occur during situations of active conflict but in peacetime, mostly while covering dangerous assignments or reporting on corruption, organized crime and other illegal activities." (page 7) We urge Security Council members to take under advisement the findings of this report, and the recommendations from the Human Rights Council's 27 September 2012 Resolution on the Safety of Journalists (co-sponsored by 5 sitting Security Council members) that "calls upon States to promote a safe and enabling environment for journalists to perform their work independently and without undue interference" (OP 8); and "encourages States to put in place voluntary protection programs for journalists" (OP 9).

In light of the above, we stress the **need for the Security Council to mandate the protection of journalists**. As noted in the Secretary-General's May 2012 report on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, "since the adoption of resolution [1738 (2006)], the [Security] Council has expressed concern about attacks against journalists in only one situation-specific resolution, concerning Afghanistan, and it did not call for any action in response." (S/2012/376 paragraph 15). Despite the additional recognition of the dangers faced by journalists in the Council's resolution 2093 on Somalia (2013), the Council has yet to mandate specific action for the protection of journalists. The Secretary General recommended that the Council develop "a more proactive approach to the issue [of protection of journalists]" (S/2012/376, paragraph 15). The 2012 UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity also calls for the need to "strengthen provisions for the safety of journalists in conflict zones" (paragraph 5.24). With these calls to action in mind, and in light of the distinctive threats faced by journalists outlined above, **the Council should: (1) recognize the particular vulnerability of journalists in its resolutions on crisis situations, and (2) in situations where peacekeeping missions are deployed, mandate the mission to ensure the protection of journalists as a group of civilians under imminent threat of physical violence.**

We thank you for the attention you are giving to this crucial issue, and look forward to hearing your intervention during the 17 July debate and hope that you will highlight the four points above in your statement to the Council. In addition, we urge you to take action in the future to operationalize these calls in Security Council resolutions.

With our highest regards,

Canadian Association of Journalists
Committee to Protect Journalists
FIDH – International Federation for Human Rights
Free Press Unlimited
Global Forum for Media Development
International Center for Journalists
International Media Support
International Press Institute
Internews
Reporters Without Borders
Rory Peck Trust