

**Committee:** Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee

**Issue:** Addressing human rights abuses towards journalists, trade unionists and human rights defenders

**Student Officer:** Andriana Gregoriou

**Position:** Co-Chair

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## PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

Dear delegates,

My name is Andriana Gregoriou and I am an upcoming 11<sup>th</sup>-grade student at the German School of Thessaloniki. This year I have the great honor of serving as a Co-Chair in the Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee of the DSTMUN. Being my first chairing experience, I am infinitely excited to attend this conference, as I hope you are too.

MUN conferences have brought my attention to significant international issues multiple times and I hope this one will do the same for you. Being informed, having an opinion and supporting your views are all qualities that we develop during this process and are the ultimate key to becoming an active citizen of the future.

This study guide serves the purpose of becoming your starting point for your research and giving you an adequate overview of the topic. Although I really hope it helps you, I kindly remind you that the study guide should by no means be your only preparation for the conference. Use the bibliography and the information to enhance and ease your work, but do not confine yourself to only that. The mentioned countries are just a few of those actually involved in the issue; thus, you should rely on your own research. The more research you conduct, the more successful and fun will the debate be!

This year's GA3 topics are very interesting and crucial current affairs; I am convinced that we are to experience a very fruitful debate. I am therefore filled with excitement to meet you and work with you! Should you have any further questions, feel free to contact me: [andrianagregoriou@gmail.com](mailto:andrianagregoriou@gmail.com).

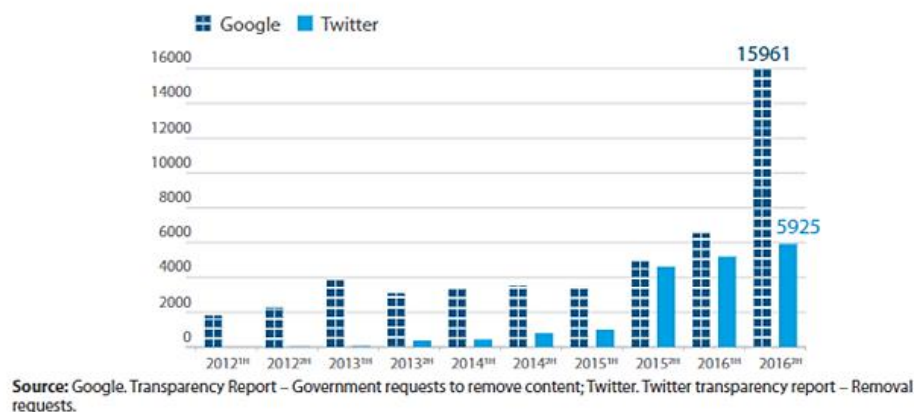
Kindest regards,

Andriana Gregoriou

## TOPIC INTRODUCTION

Speaking the truth and investigating national issues to the benefit of the people, it is indisputable that journalists, trade unionists and human rights defenders have very dangerous occupations. However, this danger has reached an unfortunate extent, leading to physical or verbal abuse of activists and journalists. When the human rights they are entitled to get violated, these people are deprived of their ability to speak freely, inform and investigate.

**Figure 1-2: Number of content removal requests made by governments received by Google and Twitter**



**Figure 1: UNESCO chart on governmental intervention in digital information<sup>1</sup>**

Numerous cases of physical harassment have been reported, including murders, hostage-taking and imprisonment as a result of information about corruption or crime. Shockingly, most murders are not located in war zones or at times of violent conflict. On the contrary, they are individual cases of governments' or large companies' targets. Furthermore, activists and journalists rarely receive the necessary judicial treatment they deserve, if they even receive any at all.

Not only are human rights defenders, trade unionists and journalists physically harassed, but they are also digitally threatened. In modern society, where social media and online platforms are detrimental to the public's information, they have also become one of the main areas of abuse towards activists and reporters. Online insults include sexual or life threats, which also violate these peoples' right for freedom of speech, information and expression.

Lastly, another issue concerning the global society currently is the contribution of the COVID-19 pandemic to the limitation of press freedom. It is a fact that information on the virus is considered sensitive content by governments, either with press freedom backgrounds or not. Reporters' access to reliable information is therefore limited.

<sup>1</sup> "World Trends In Freedom Of Expression And Media Development: Global Report 2017/2018". Unesdoc.Unesco.Org, 2018, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000261065>.

Subsequently, it is undoubtable that this issue is urgent and must be dealt with carefully and quickly. We must not forget that both activists, including human rights defenders and trade-unionists, and reporters work to benefit the public. It is, therefore, our duty to keep them safe and protect everyone's right to expression and information.

## DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

### Human Rights

Human Rights are the inalienable and universal rights that, according to the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), every human is entitled to, with no exceptions as for ethnicity, color, religion etc. "Human rights include the right to life and liberty, freedom from slavery and torture, freedom of opinion and expression, the right to work and education, and many more."<sup>2</sup>

### Trade Unionist

Members of a trade union are called trade-unionists and defend the rights of workers in a specific industry.<sup>3</sup>

### Human Rights defender

Human Rights defenders are activists, who protect Human Rights and work either locally or internationally to prevent their violation.<sup>4</sup>

### Harassment

A repeatedly disturbing action or behavior that is either physically or verbally abusive and upsets someone (ex. sexual abuse) is considered harassment.<sup>5</sup>

### Freedom of the Press

Press freedom is a journalists' right to publicly share information or express opinions without governmental intervention and censorship.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> "Human Rights". Unis.Unvienna.Org, [http://www.unis.unvienna.org/unis/en/topics/human\\_rights.html](http://www.unis.unvienna.org/unis/en/topics/human_rights.html).

<sup>3</sup> "TRADE UNIONIST | Meaning In The Cambridge English Dictionary". *Dictionary.Cambridge.Org*, 2020, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/trade-unionist>.

<sup>4</sup> "OHCHR | Who Is A Defender". Ohchr.Org, 2020, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/issues/srhrdefenders/pages/defender.aspx>.

<sup>5</sup> "HARASSMENT | Meaning In The Cambridge English Dictionary". *Dictionary.Cambridge.Org*, 2020, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/harassment>.

<sup>6</sup> "Freedom Of The Press". *HISTORY*, 2017, <https://www.history.com/topics/united-states-constitution/freedom-of-the-press>.

## Transparency

When referring to political issues, transparency is a government's or entity's quality of refraining from secrecy in business and financial activities, thanks to which they are trusted and appreciated.<sup>7</sup>

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Journalists, human rights defenders and trade unionists all speak their mind and support their opinion or inform the public. It is for that reason that they often attract criticism, which easily escalates to different types of abuse.

A journalist's job is not restricted to broadcasting filtered information, carefully selected by officials. On the contrary, some specialize in investigating the governments' most confidential information, exposing corruption, or broaching a sensitive and controversial topic, all of which are condemned by the government and society.

Human rights defenders represent the public and take action to protect the rights everyone is entitled to without any discrimination. Since such rights are not respected by some, these activists are also threatened and harassed.

Accordingly, trade unionists represent a smaller group in society, namely workers. Given that the work of trade unions is not globally recognized or supported for its economic impact, trade unionists face constant abuse for their work. Trade unions are furthermore in decline, attributing unemployment rates and membership drops to malfunctions in the private sector. ILO (International Labor Organization) has previously called upon numerous countries to revise labor law and protect trade unions. However, abusive behaviors towards defenders of the labor force are still taking place, as the Business and Human Rights Resources Centre has presented.<sup>8</sup>

## Freedom

The inalienable right of expression and press freedom protect people from any kind of abusive reaction to their opinion or work. This means that anyone can support their views, share or receive information and freely show their support towards an ideology, a group, a religion etc. These virtues do, however, have some restrictions for the sake of ethics and legality.

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<sup>7</sup> "TRANSPARENCY | Meaning In The Cambridge English Dictionary". *Dictionary.Cambridge.Org*, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/transparency>.

<sup>8</sup> "Alleged Abuses Against Trade Unionists | Business & Human Rights Resource Centre". *Business-Humanrights.Org*, <https://www.business-humanrights.org/en/freedom-of-association-0/browse-by-issue/alleged-abuses-against-trade-unionists>.

Along with restrictions to prevent criminal activity and protect morals, some confinements may have loopholes, which do not benefit society, when exploited. Article 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights specifically elaborates on the right not only to form but also to join trade unions.<sup>9</sup> Governments, however, often take advantage of measures aiming for the protection of national security and peoples' reputation; thus, journalists and activists are often largely confined, one such example being the Official Secrets Act<sup>10</sup>, according to which the possession of sensitive governmental data is liable to punishment. When these restrictions are disobeyed, the consequences are often brutal. Threats, kidnappings, murders and rapes are only some of the reactions of powerful groups and people to leaked sensitive information. An example of such suspicious activity is the 2013 controversy around the largest left-wing rebel group in Colombia, which was accused of threatening trade unionists for their work and declaring trade union leaders a "military target".<sup>11</sup>

However, it is not only governmental condemnation that follows free expression. Opinions supported by activists, such as human rights defenders often draw the public's attention, which does not always have a positive impact on their work. Namely, activists are determined and constantly calling for an end in violence towards women<sup>12</sup> and domestic



**Figure 2: 2017 Freedom House cartoon on threats against press freedom<sup>13</sup>**

<sup>9</sup> Factsheet-Trade Union Rights. EUROPEAN COURT OF HUMAN RIGHTS, 2018, p. 8, [https://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/FS\\_Trade\\_union\\_ENG.pdf](https://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/FS_Trade_union_ENG.pdf).

<sup>10</sup> "Article 10: Freedom Of Expression | Equality And Human Rights Commission". Equalityhumanrights.Com, 2020, <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/y-ddeddf-hawliau-dynol/article-10-freedom-expression>.

<sup>11</sup> "Farc Denies Threatening Trade Unions". BBC News, 2013, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-22749771>.

<sup>12</sup> Zerzan, Rebecca. "Around The World, Activists Call For An End To Violence Against Women". Unfpa.Org, 2016, <https://www.unfpa.org/fr/node/15471>.

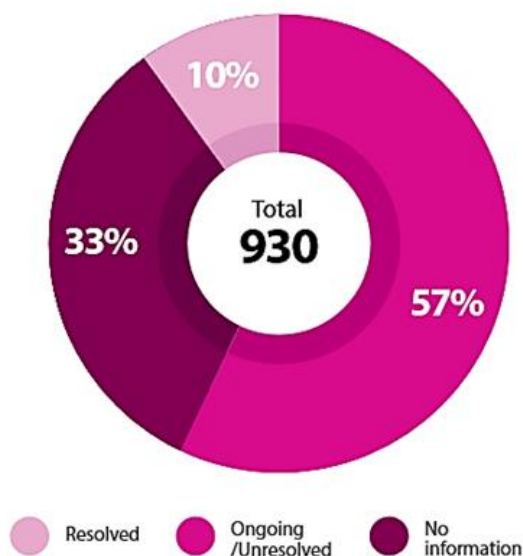
<sup>13</sup> Campbell, David. "Visual Journalism And The Fight For Freedom Of The Press". Witness, 2017, <https://witness.worldpressphoto.org/visual-journalism-and-the-fight-for-freedom-of-the-press-5366aafe1404>.

violence, which is on the rise given the current Covid-19 pandemic.<sup>14</sup> The effort to acclaim essential human rights by ending violence fueled by discrimination is a “fight, in which numerous women are terrified to participate since their work often poses a threat to their safety”.

### Physical harassment

Reported harassment includes murder, hostage-taking and imprisonment. Strange as it may seem, most murders have taken place in war-free zones, meaning that they were completely intentional. The authorities rarely follow the necessary judicial procedures in such cases, if judicial treatment is even received. Generally, the government avoids broaching such subjects and would rather kill such cases than investigate them any further. UNESCO official research has revealed that about 9/10 cases of abuse towards journalists remain open. Other sources report the violation of official judicial orders on the release of journalists and activists, including delay or complete defiance of release orders.<sup>15</sup>

**Figure 4-9: Status of Judicial Inquiry Into killings of Journalists, 2006-2016**



**Figure 3: UNESCO pie chart on the state of trials about journalist murders (2006-2016)**

### Verbal and online harassment

Abuse towards human rights defenders, journalists and trade unionists is furthermore not limited to physical, but also includes digital threats. Online information platforms are nowadays so widespread that they make up one of the main areas of press freedom limitation. From sexual threats to life threats and offensive comments, reporters' and activists' rights are constantly violated.

<sup>14</sup> Graham-Harrison, Emma et al. "Lockdowns Around The World Bring Rise In Domestic Violence". The Guardian, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/mar/28/lockdowns-world-rise-domestic-violence>.

<sup>15</sup> UNESCO. Director-General, 2017- (Azoulay, A.). writer of foreword. "World trends in freedom of expression and media development: global report 2017/2018." 2018. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000261065>.



Although digital platforms have the benefit of being easily accessed by everyone, they are equally easily controlled and monitored by the authorities. The uploaded content is therefore filtered and free from any sensitivity to the government information. The media are abused through mechanisms and operations, which are either governmental or state-controlled and ownership of private news outlets. Thanks to these measures, the media are under close surveillance and shared information inadequate.

Figure 4-13: Types of threats to the digital safety of journalism

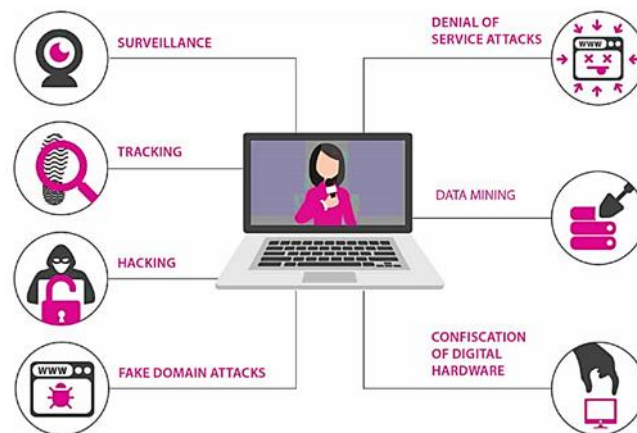


Figure 4: UNESCO figure on the types of online abuse towards journalists<sup>16</sup>

Actions against the publication of sensitive content include numerous violations of human rights in the digital world. Women are reportedly targeted most often. Reportedly, an increasingly large percentage of women in the profession have experienced abusive behavior due to their work, leaving more than one-third of them considering a career change.<sup>17</sup>

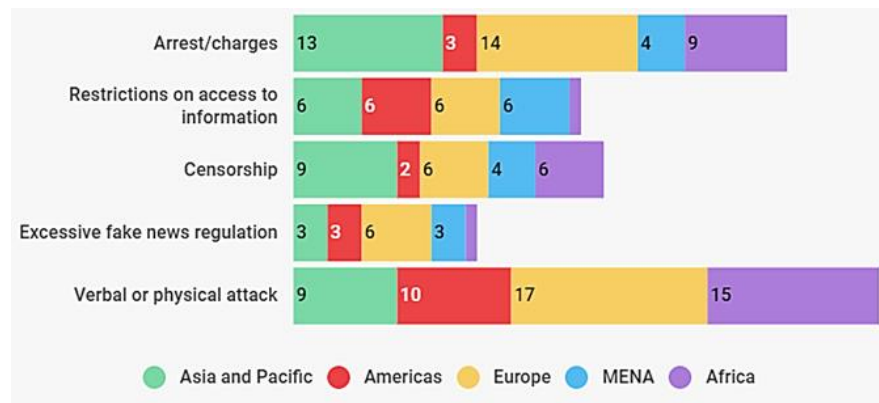
### COVID-19 implications

The current COVID-19 pandemic has caused a global crisis. Indisputably, the socioeconomic complications it has led to are of great significance, but we must not neglect the impact it has had on press freedom. During this very difficult time, public information is of utmost importance. However, the information on the health crisis is so sensitive and confidential to the government, that journalists' resources are largely limited. Despite the importance of such content, some officials restrict reporters' access to the relatable information, subsequently violating press freedom. There seems to be a correlation between covid-19 censored countries and low-

<sup>16</sup> UNESCO. Director-General, 2017- (Azoulay, A.). writer of foreword. "World trends in freedom of expression and media development: global report 2017/2018." 2018. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000261065>.

<sup>17</sup> Elks, Sonia. "'I Will Rape You': Female Journalists Face 'Relentless' Abuse". Reuters, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-global-women-media/i-will-rape-you-female-journalists-face-relentless-abuse-idUSKCN1LT39G>.

ranked countries in the Press Freedom Index, an example being China. The imposed measures decrease government transparency and increase surveillance, shrinking freedom and accelerating the issue of human rights violations as far as information and freedom of expression are concerned.



**Figure 5: International Press Institute (IPI) chart on the number of Media Freedom Violations due to Covid-19 by region<sup>18</sup>**

### Abuse with an international impact<sup>19</sup>

Cases of abusive behavior towards trade-unionists, human rights defenders and reporters often attract the public's attention and create not only concerns but also a feeling of unfair treatment. Reactions are usually local, but certainly not always. In the past few years, we have marked numerous murders or imprisonments of activists and journalists, which concerned the global population for many reasons. People are not only suspicious of the abuse towards anyone who exploits their right of expression, but also to the effect this has on their families, the resulting limitation of press freedom and the unfair judicial treatment of the victims.

Trade unionists often face dismissal due to their work and are often involved in controversies with large entities, when their interests are not supported. Unionists are therefore led to protesting and causing nationwide shutdowns expressing their dissatisfaction.

Jamal Khashoggi and Jan Kuciak are two household names, which make up examples of journalist abuse with an international impact. Both were murdered, after broaching on topics, which were threatening to significant personalities, such as government officials or businessmen. What is more, Jamal's case still remains

<sup>18</sup> "WPDF 2020: COVID-19 Accelerating A Global Decline In Media Freedom - International Press Institute". International Press Institute, 2020, <http://ipi.media/wpfd-2020-covid-19-accelerating-a-global-decline-in-media-freedom/>.

<sup>19</sup> "One Free Press Coalition's '10 Most Urgent' List, July 2019". News.Yahoo.Com, 2019, <https://news.yahoo.com/one-free-press-coalitions-10-most-urgent-list-july-2019-090000656.html>.



unsolved with the Turkish and Saudi Arabian government still debating on who to blame, even two years later.

Similar to Jan Kuciak, Daphne Caruana Galizia's work was investigative and focused on corruption and posed a great threat to governmental secrecy and led to her killing. Accordingly, TV presenter Viktoria Marinova was reportedly first raped and then killed. Her murder potentially linked to her show's interview with investigative journalists, in which they discussed possible illegal and corrupt relations between politicians and businessmen.<sup>20</sup>

However, as mentioned before, abusive reactions to journalists' work do not only include physical harassment, but also verbal. Such a case is that of CBS reporter Weija Jiang, who has played a crucial role in the profession but has also been verbally attacked. Namely, Jiang is the protagonist in the infamous Donald Trump interview on COVID-19<sup>21</sup>, in which it is supported that she was disrespected. Accordingly, journalist groups are banned from broaching the subject of the ongoing Black Lives Matter protests, including black journalists<sup>22</sup>. There have also been reports on arrest and violence towards reporters covering the topic.

The abovementioned cases of abuse towards people who freely expressed themselves have drawn global attention and condemnation. Given that they all took place in the same time period, namely that from the end of 2017 to 2018, and alongside many more such examples, it is indisputable that 2018 was a hazardous and deadly year for supporters of free expression.

## MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED

### France

France, along with the Council of Europe has been an active and very crucial supporter of RSF (Reporters Without Borders). However, France has also reported numerous violent attacks against activists, such as during the Yellow Vest protest.

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<sup>20</sup> "Bulgarian Journalist Killed In Park". BBC News, 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-45777948>.

<sup>21</sup> Ellison, Sarah, and Elahe Izadi. "Trump's 'Ask China' Response To CBS's Weijia Jiang Shocked The Room — And Was Part Of A Pattern". The Washington Post, 2020, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/style/trumps-ask-china-response-to-cbss-weijia-jiang-shocked-the-room--and-was-part-of-a-pattern/2020/05/12/a04bed28-947d-11ea-82b4-c8db161ff6e5\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/style/trumps-ask-china-response-to-cbss-weijia-jiang-shocked-the-room--and-was-part-of-a-pattern/2020/05/12/a04bed28-947d-11ea-82b4-c8db161ff6e5_story.html).

<sup>22</sup> "USA: Black Journalists Barred From Covering BLM Protests / IFJ". Ifj.Org, 2020, <https://www.ifj.org/media-centre/news/detail/category/press-releases/article/usa-black-journalists-barred-from-covering-blm-protests.html>.

### United States of America

The United States of America still records a large number of human rights violations towards anyone investigating governmental matters, informing the public about sensitive data, expressing their opinion and defending it. A leaked US document has proven that the USA uses secret technology to track down targeted activists and reporters along the US-Mexico border.<sup>23</sup>

### Saudi Arabia

Press freedom in Saudi Arabia is indisputably limited since there are no independent media. Jamal Khashoggi's infamous case in 2018 proved that the Saudi Arabian government closely observes journalists with surveillance systems and controls them, both in and outside of the country.

### China

China's technological advancements have allowed officials to have both citizens and the media under close and strict surveillance. People encounter numerous obstacles in their efforts to express themselves, leading to the captivity of over 100 journalists and bloggers<sup>24</sup>, whose lives are at stake.

### Sweden

Sweden first introduced the first press freedom law in 1776<sup>25</sup> and now it's still high up on the list of countries, where freedom of speech is protected. Furthermore, Sweden's International Development Agency (SIDA) actively supports RSF, proving the country's loyalty to journalists and activists.

### Norway

Not only is Norway ranked first in the World Press Freedom Index 2020, but it also continues to review legislation, aiming for the elimination of hate and fake news, the safety of journalists, ensure the inclusion of the public in debates and the protection of people's right for expression and information.

### North Korea

North Korea's totalitarian regime does not allow its people to be informed by foreign sources and subsequently about anything else apart from what the government

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<sup>23</sup> "United States : Trump-Era Hostility toward Press Persists: Reporters without Borders." RSF, [rsf.org/en/united-states](https://rsf.org/en/united-states).

<sup>24</sup> "China : Even Tighter Control: Reporters without Borders." RSF, [rsf.org/en/china](https://rsf.org/en/china).

<sup>25</sup> "Sweden : World's First Press Freedom Law, but...: Reporters without Borders." RSF, [rsf.org/en/sweden](https://rsf.org/en/sweden).

announces using technological means; thus, citizens are almost completely controlled by the authorities.



**Figure 6: Press freedom in countries<sup>26</sup> in 2020**

## UNESCO

UNESCO strongly supports press freedom and freedom and freedom of information<sup>27</sup>, since they are crucial points in their virtues and ideology. The introduction of the World Press Freedom Day is also part of their work.

## Reporters Without Borders (RSF)

Reporters without Borders are a Non-Governmental Organization founded in Paris, 1985, whose mission it is to defend and promote the freedom of information and safety of journalists.

## International Press Institute (IPI)

The International Press Institute is a global network, aiming to defend media freedom and independent journalism while allowing reporters to fulfill their public duties adequately and safely.

<sup>26</sup> McCarthy, Niall, and Felix Richter. "Infographic: The State Of World Press Freedom." Statista Infographics, 23 Apr. 2020, [www.statista.com/chart/13640/press-freedom-index/](https://www.statista.com/chart/13640/press-freedom-index/).

<sup>27</sup> "Press Freedom on All Platforms." UNESCO, 10 Dec. 2018, [en.unesco.org/themes/press-freedom-all-platforms](https://en.unesco.org/themes/press-freedom-all-platforms).

### International Labor Organization (ILO)

The International Labor Organization is a UN agency, founded in 1919, which is currently working with 187 states on protecting the rights of workers, irrespective of their gender and setting minimum labor standards for their safety.

### International Freedom of Expression Exchange (IFEX)

The International Freedom of Expression Exchange (IFEX) is a non-profit Non-Governmental Organization founded in 1992<sup>28</sup> whose goal it is to promote and defend free expression, through the local work of its members, including numerous campaigns and projects.

### BLOCS EXPECTED

During the process of lobbying, delegates will be asked to form alliances with regard to the compatibility of their policies. In total, two alliances should be created.

The first alliance should include policies which protect the right of expression, therefore defending press freedom, human rights defenders and trade unionists or actively support organizations with similar purposes.

Countries and entities, which do not encourage uncensored expression and publication of information, should be part of the second alliance.

### TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Date	Description of event
1908 <sup>29</sup>	In Myanmar, the Head of State imposed numerous limitations on journalism and activism announcing organizations illegal thanks to the Unlawful Associations Act.
1923	According to the Official Secrets Act, the possession of sensitive to the government information led to the prison sentence of up to 14 years.
1948	The Universal Declaration of Human Rights <sup>30</sup> demanded that everyone had

<sup>28</sup> IFEX. 2020. *Our History - What We Do - IFEX*. [online] Available at: <https://ifex.org/what-we-do/our-history/> [Accessed 20 May 2020].

<sup>29</sup> Holliday, Ian. "Dictatorship and Deadlock." *Burma Redux: Global Justice and the Quest for Political Reform in Myanmar*, Columbia University Press, 2012, pp. 1–303.

	equal rights for the first time.
1950	The Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms aims to defend human rights in all cases.
1993	UN Declaration of Elimination of Violence against Women protects women's rights to express themselves, amongst others. <sup>31</sup>
2013	Rumors about the involvement of the Colombian Farc rebels (left-wing group) in the issue of threatening letters to trade-unionists arose. All the accusations against members of the group were denied.
2016	UNESCO's 2008 UN mechanism to monitor the killing of journalists is renewed as part of the International Program for the Development and Communication <sup>32</sup> . The report was submitted by UNESCO's Director General, aiming to combat crime against freedom of expression and impunity.
October 16 <sup>th</sup> , 2017	Investigative reporter Daphne Caruana Galizia <sup>33</sup> was murdered in a car bomb in Malta.
February 21 <sup>st</sup> , 2018	Ján Kuciak, an investigative journalist was murdered along with his fiancée at their home in Slovakia <sup>34</sup> .

<sup>30</sup>"Timeline: Women Of The World, Unite!". UN Women, <http://interactive.unwomen.org/multimedia/timeline/womenunite/en/index.html#/>.

<sup>31</sup> "Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women." OHCHR, 20 Dec. 1993, [www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/violenceagainstwomen.aspx](http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/violenceagainstwomen.aspx).

<sup>32</sup> "UNESCO Director-General's Report On The Safety Of Journalists And The Danger Of Impunity". UNESCO, 2020, <https://en.unesco.org/themes/safety-journalists/dgreport>.

<sup>33</sup> Garside, Juliette. "Malta Car Bomb Kills Panama Papers Journalist." The Guardian, Guardian News and Media, 16 Oct. 2017, [www.theguardian.com/world/2017/oct/16/malta-car-bomb-kills-panama-papers-journalist](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/oct/16/malta-car-bomb-kills-panama-papers-journalist).

<sup>34</sup> "Jan Kuciak: Ex-Soldier 'Admits Double Murder' in Slovakia." BBC News, BBC, 12 Apr. 2019, [www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-47907620](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-47907620).

June 28 <sup>th</sup> , 2018	Four journalists of the Capital Gazette are shot dead in the United States <sup>35</sup> .
October 2 <sup>nd</sup> , 2018	Journalist Jamal Khashoggi was murdered <sup>36</sup> at the Saudi Arabian consulate in Istanbul.
2019	An intelligence agency in Afghanistan was called upon to release two human rights defenders, who were detained after exposing sexual harassment of children. <sup>37</sup>
2020	A journalist covering the Black Lives Matter protests in Toulouse was violently approached by police forces. <sup>38</sup>
2020	UK prime minister Boris Johnson condemned the participation of activists in the Black Lives Matter protest, claiming that they “are in all probability going to end in violence”. <sup>39</sup>

## RELEVANT RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES AND EVENTS

### UNESCO Resolution 29 "Condemnation of violence against journalists"<sup>40</sup>

This 1997 Resolution proposes the condemnation of violence towards journalists and considers such action a “crime against society” since it violates the right of expression along with many more. Punishment for such actions is also proposed in this resolution, including the proposal of prosecution and prison sentence to offenders, after having been judged.

<sup>35</sup> Reporters Without Borders (RSF). “WORLDWIDE ROUND-UP OF JOURNALISTS KILLED, DETAINED, HELD HOSTAGE, OR MISSING IN 2018.” 2019. [file:///C:/Users/user/Desktop/worldwide\\_round-up.pdf](file:///C:/Users/user/Desktop/worldwide_round-up.pdf).

<sup>36</sup> “Jamal Khashoggi: All You Need to Know about Saudi Journalist's Death.” BBC News, BBC, 19 June 2019, [www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-45812399](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-45812399).

<sup>37</sup> “Afghanistan's Intelligence Agency Must Release Human Rights Defenders Who Exposed Paedophile Ring”. Amnesty.Org, 2019, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/11/afghanistan-release-hrds-now/>.

<sup>38</sup> “France: Journalist Attacked By Police During BLM Protest In Toulouse | Ruptly”. Ruptly, 2020, <https://ruptly.tv/en/videos/20200612-030>.

<sup>39</sup> Boris Johnson: We Should Not Support BLM Protests 'Likely To End In Violence'. 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DCQbRSmXVTA>.

<sup>40</sup> Resolution 29 "Condemnation Of Violence Against Journalists". UNESCO, 1997, <https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/resolution29-en.pdf>.



### **UN Human Rights Council Resolution 33/2 on the safety of journalists<sup>41</sup>**

This Resolution was submitted by the UN Human Rights Council in 2016 to ensure the implementation of measures against abuse and terrorism towards reporters, such as the protection of victims and the creation of a safe environment for reporters.

### **UN Security Council Resolution 2242<sup>42</sup>**

Submitted in 2015, the 2242 Resolution addresses the issue of female vulnerability in the press, the concern about women being targeted for their work and calls for measures securing equality and integration of women's needs.

### **Universal Declaration of Human Rights<sup>43</sup>**

First adopted in 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights supported the unprecedented idea of rights, to which all people are entitled to without any sort of discrimination and include the freedom of speech and the right to safety. However, being a non-binding document, it is often disputed.

### **UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders<sup>44</sup>**

This declaration, although not legally binding, encourages everyone to defend human rights and emphasizes the protection of human rights defenders.

### **European Convention on Human Rights: Article 11 safeguards<sup>45</sup>**

The convention was held in 1950 and amongst others, defends the rights of trade-unionists, aiming for a peaceful and effective labor force. Included in this article is also the well-known right to form and join trade-unions.

## **PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE**

The issue of abuses towards journalists and activists has deeply concerned the public. Therefore, attempts to solve it are numerous and include protests, resolutions, proposals, and frameworks, addressing both physical and verbal abuse.

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<sup>41</sup> Acting On UN Human Rights Council Resolution 33/2 On The Safety Of Journalists. ARTICLE 19, 2017, p. 48, [https://www.article19.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/safety\\_of\\_journalists\\_WEB\\_23.10.pdf](https://www.article19.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/safety_of_journalists_WEB_23.10.pdf).

<sup>42</sup> "Resolution 2242 (2015) / Adopted By The Security Council At Its 7533Rd Meeting, On 13 October 2015". United Nations Digital Library System, 2015, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/807245?ln=en>.

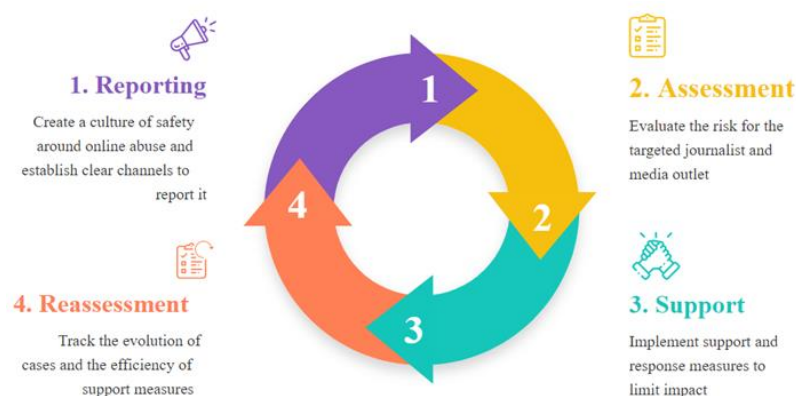
<sup>43</sup> "Universal Declaration Of Human Rights". Un.Org, 1948, <https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>.

<sup>44</sup> "OHCHR | Declaration On Human Rights Defenders". Ohchr.Org, 1999, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/SRHRDefenders/Pages/Declaration.aspx>.

<sup>45</sup> Factsheet-Trade Union Rights. EUROPEAN COURT OF HUMAN RIGHTS, 2018, p. 8, [https://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/FS\\_Trade\\_union\\_ENG.pdf](https://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/FS_Trade_union_ENG.pdf).

To protect journalists and activists from online attacks, the IPI has launched a framework<sup>46</sup> for websites to protect their reporters' rights. First, the IPI encourages the feeling of safety within newsrooms and urges publishers to protect it. According to this framework, journalists ought to be informed about reporting abuse and referring to safety coordinators, if needed. Most importantly, newsrooms must support journalists and press freedom and protect media information.

Additionally, a project called "ONTHELINE Newsrooms: Defending Press Freedom" serves the purpose of proposing the global implementation of measures to protect reporters in newsrooms. Addressing online harassment, the proposed protocol was inspired by the best practices of press freedom online in Europe.



**Figure 7: ONTHELINE's protocol to protect press freedom online<sup>47</sup>**

The Council of Europe has also attempted to eliminate abusive behavior towards anyone who freely expresses themselves. The Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms took place in 1950, the main subject of which was the reassured obedience to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Its articles cover most issues concerning the public on the topic of abuse towards journalists, trade unionists and human rights defenders. Namely, the rights to life, security, a fair trial and respect for private life are protected, any type of harassment or torture is prohibited, and the freedoms of expression and thought are acknowledged.<sup>48</sup> The OSCE (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe) has had a similar approach and has attempted to ease hostility against human-rights

<sup>46</sup> Tobitt, Charlotte. "New Guidance to Protect Journalists from Online Abuse Calls for 'Culture of Safety' in Newsroom." Press Gazette, 19 Feb. 2020, [www.pressgazette.co.uk/international-press-body-launches-guidance-for-newsrooms-to-protect-journalists-online-abuse/](http://www.pressgazette.co.uk/international-press-body-launches-guidance-for-newsrooms-to-protect-journalists-online-abuse/).

<sup>47</sup> "Measures For Newsrooms And Journalists To Address Online Harassment". Ontheline, <https://newsrooms-ontheline.ipi.media/>.

<sup>48</sup> European Convention On Human Rights. Council Of Europe, 2020, p. 34, [https://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Convention\\_ENG.pdf](https://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Convention_ENG.pdf).

defenders by acknowledging and embracing not only their rights but also their significance and urgency of their protection.<sup>49</sup>

Another attempt to diminish abuse towards reporters or activists of any sort is the International Labour Organization's report on the labor standards for trade-unionists, which includes the conclusions of the Committee on Freedom of Association (CFA). Namely, the report constantly highlights the importance of the protection of human rights to ensure the creation of a healthy, safe and productive working environment. It is furthermore pointed out that governmental action and measures to ensure the obedience of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in the work of trade unions is essential. The report specifically elaborates on trade-unionists' rights to live, safety and integrity when supporting their views.<sup>50</sup>

## POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

What is of utmost importance when considering potential solutions to such an urgent issue, one must first acknowledge the importance of free expression. Why does society need human-rights defenders, trade unionists and journalists? All these people work for the public and empower a democratic society; thus, they play a vital role in our lives, either noticeably or not. Through their work, our freedoms to express our opinions and to influence and be influenced through debate are defended and promoted, therefore leading to evolvement.

Having understood and acknowledged, one earns respect for the work of anyone informing or defending the public, which is the first key step to preventing abusive behavior towards them due to their work. It is furthermore possible that entities, groups and states express their intolerance towards the lack of governmental transparency, especially at times of need, and harassment of trade unionists, reporters and human rights defenders. Human rights must be protected at all times.

Any attempt to ease the issue should be characterized by the acceptance of individual or governmental responsibility, which does not only concern the information of the public but also the protection of activists' and journalists' human rights. Following the principals of democracy and a free society, acceptance of individual opinions is essential, along with the right for access to unfiltered

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<sup>49</sup> Guidelines On The Protection Of Human Rights Defenders. OSCE Office For Democratic Institutions And Human Rights (ODIHR), 2020, p. 152, <https://www.osce.org/odihr/guidelines-on-the-protection-of-human-rights-defenders?download=true>.

<sup>50</sup> "Compilation Of Decisions Of The CFA Content: 2. Trade Union And Employers Organizations Rights And Civil Liberties". Ilo.Org, 2017, [https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:70002:0::NO:70002:P70002\\_HIER\\_ELEMENT\\_ID,P70002\\_HIER\\_LEVEL:3942675,1](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:70002:0::NO:70002:P70002_HIER_ELEMENT_ID,P70002_HIER_LEVEL:3942675,1).

information. You may find the CPJ's article on genders in the media helpful for your research on plausible solutions.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Attacks On The Press: Gender And Media Freedom Worldwide. Committee To Protect Journalists (CPJ), 2016, p. 176, [https://books.google.gr/books?id=YS\\_fCwAAQBAJ&pg=PT94&lpg=PT94&dq=journalist+abuse+solutions&source=bl&ots=vGmKIszkWG&sig=ACfU3U0xnLfRI6v74ia7WDKG5WTUxeV8vw&hl=el&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjbkITeqMrpAhWRAWMBHWdsBUQQ6AEwBXoECAoQAQ#v=onepage&q=journalist%20abuse%20solutions&f=false](https://books.google.gr/books?id=YS_fCwAAQBAJ&pg=PT94&lpg=PT94&dq=journalist+abuse+solutions&source=bl&ots=vGmKIszkWG&sig=ACfU3U0xnLfRI6v74ia7WDKG5WTUxeV8vw&hl=el&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjbkITeqMrpAhWRAWMBHWdsBUQQ6AEwBXoECAoQAQ#v=onepage&q=journalist%20abuse%20solutions&f=false).

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