

RENMUN VII

Peace in Permanence



March 5-6, 2022

Chair Report

Chair Introduction

Hi everyone, we're Alina and Justin! A Y12 and Y11 from LPCUWC and CIS respectively, and we're honored to serve as your chairs for UNESCO at RENMUN VII.

Not going to lie, as typical human beings, we're really scared. It's our first time at RENMUN though we have been delegating and chairing other conferences for the past few years. So please bear with us because we haven't chaired an MUN since the summer (blame the lack of super cool MUNs out there). Anyways, we're so glad you all are here because we're sure we'll be an incredible (and active) council.

Since UNESCO is one of the beginner councils at RENMUN, we're aware there will be varying forms of experience showcased in our council, so as your cool chairs as always, we're here to support you with resources, sample resolutions and ways to be prepared for your first or shaky MUN experience. Our contact information will be listed below, so feel free to reach out to us anytime!

We look forward to meeting you all in March and all we'll say is – prepare well but don't over prepare either, just enjoy the experience and let it show you the wonders of being chaired by us (insert a picture of us judging you). Last but not least, we assure you we're way more funny in real life than what is being depicted in this report. This chair introduction was written at 2 in the morning for your information.

Good luck delegates,

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United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, and a brief overview of the topic

UNESCO seeks to build peace through international cooperation in education, sciences and culture. So think of UNESCO as Emma Watson and all she's trying to do is grassroots activism to raise awareness about important and underrepresented societal issues. UNESCO's programmes contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) defined in the 2030 Agenda, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2015.

Political and economic arrangements of governments are not enough to secure the lasting and sincere support of the general public. Peace must be founded upon dialogue and mutual understanding. Peace must be built upon the intellectual and moral solidarity of humanity. *Hence, peace in permanence.*

UNESCO's founding vision was born in response to a world war marked by racist and anti-Semitic violence. Seventy years later and many liberation struggles later, UNESCO's mandate is more relevant than ever. Cultural diversity is under attack and new forms of intolerance, rejection of scientific facts and threats to freedom of expression challenge peace and human rights. In response, UNESCO's duty remains to reaffirm the humanist missions of education, science and culture.

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 council 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. It is now more than ever, pivotal, to discuss solutions and catalyze change for an equal and fair working environment for journalists and media workers. As a UN council, it's our duty and right to ease the tension. We proudly put forward one of the two topics to be debated in our council: Addressing politically motivated assaults on journalists around the globe.

Key Terms

Term	Definition
Impunity	Exemption from punishment or freedom from the injurious consequences of an action.
World Press Freedom Day	Every year, the 3rd May is a date which celebrates the fundamental principles of press freedom, to evaluate press freedom around the world, to defend the media from attacks on their independence, and to pay tribute to journalists who have lost their lives in the exercise of their profession.
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)	The covenant commits its parties to respect the civil and political rights of individuals, including the right to life, freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, electoral rights, and rights to due process and a fair trial.
Freedom of press	Freedom of the press or freedom of the media is the principle that communication and expression through various media, including printed and electronic media, especially published materials, should be considered a right to be exercised freely.
Occupational safety	A multidisciplinary field concerned with the safety, health, and welfare of people in the workforce to foster a safe and healthy occupational environment
Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ)	The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) is an American independent non-profit, non-governmental organization, based in New York City, New York, with correspondents around the world. CPJ promotes press freedom and defends the rights of journalists.
International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC)	The International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC) is a UNESCO programme aimed at strengthening the development of mass media in developing

countries.

Addressing politically motivated assaults on journalists around the globe

Drawing on statistics provided by UNESCO's meeting minutes, 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 protests.

Over the past decade, we have witnessed a dramatic escalation of violence against journalists and media professionals. In many countries, they are harassed, attacked, detained, and even murdered. According to professional organizations, 2006 was the bloodiest year on record with over 150 media killings. Hundreds more media workers were arrested, threatened, or attacked because of their work. Being a journalist has never been more dangerous. Conflict and post-conflict zones are particularly hazardous environments for journalists. The safety of journalists is an issue that affects us all. Every aggression against a journalist is an attack on our most fundamental freedoms. Press freedom and freedom of expression cannot be enjoyed without basic security. Those who risk their lives to provide independent and reliable information deserve our admiration, respect, and support. They understand better than anyone that the media contribute significantly to processes of accountability, reconstruction, and reconciliation. Indeed, the growth in violence against journalists is telling, if tragic, testimony to the importance of the media to modern democracies.

Potential Clashes

Governmental tactics to maintain order

While politics plays a huge factor in why there are thousands of attacks against journalists, there are still other factors. Such as strict obedience and patriotism for one's country, hence having an equal opinion about certain issues, and if one does not comply, there are heavy consequences. An example that comes to mind was 5 years ago, a line being crossed in blood and that's the line where one could get killed in Paris, Europe, anywhere, you can get killed for your opinion. And that was a new threshold.

Increasing politicization of the pandemic

Amid the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, the work of the media is paramount as their reporting is “an essential tool for officials to quickly learn where measures are being inadequately applied”, and what concerns are most important to people. Several countries had seen “increasing politicization of the pandemic and efforts to blame its effects on political opponents, have led to threats, arrests and smear campaigns against journalists who maintain fact-based information about the spread of COVID-19 and the adequacy of measures to prevent it”. When journalists are targeted in the context of protests and criticism, these attacks are intended to silence all of civil society and this is of deep concern. Journalism enriches our understanding of every kind of political, economic, and social issue; delivers crucial – and, in the context of this pandemic - life-saving information; and helps keep governance at every level, transparent and accountable.

Key Case Studies

Somalia: Politically motivated attacks on journalists, and dangerous internet shutdowns

Eastern Africa is calling on the government of Somalia to release journalists imprisoned for exercising their right to free expression and to cease dangerous internet shutdowns. In a recent case concerning the arrest of Abdiaziz Ahmed Gurbiye of Goobjoog Media Group on 14 April 2020 for spreading false news that “offended the honor of the President”, the journalist was convicted and sentenced on 29 July 2020 based on a Facebook post he had made criticizing the government’s response to the coronavirus pandemic. Al-Shabab, which means The Youth in Arabic, is an extreme Islamist group that has been battling UN-backed government troops for more than a decade. The jihadists controlled the capital Mogadishu until 2011 when it was pushed out by African Union troops, but it still holds territory in the countryside and launches frequent attacks against government and civilian targets in Mogadishu and elsewhere. It advocates the strict Saudi-inspired Wahhabi version of Islam, while most Somalis are Sufis. It has imposed a harsh version of Sharia in areas under its control, including stoning to death women accused of adultery and amputating the hands of thieves. Government officials have blamed the group for some of Somalia’s deadliest terror attacks. Last year analysts at the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project estimated that Al-Shabab had been responsible for the deaths of over 4,000 people since 2010.

Politically motivated attacks on journalists in Haiti

Haiti is ranked 47th out of 180 countries in the 2014 Reporters Without Borders press freedom index. At least five journalists have been the victims of physical or verbal

attacks in the past month in Petit-Goâve, a coastal town 65 km west of Port-au-Prince. The latest victim was Guyto Mathieu, the director of Radio Préférence FM and correspondent for the Haïti Libre news website, on 9 September. He has repeatedly been subjected to insults and derogatory comments. According to a Petit-Goâve journalists organization, a group opposed to the local government is responsible for these verbal attacks against Mathieu, who was threatened during a demonstration on 4 September. Mathieu is regarded as a supporter and defender of Jacques Stevenson Thimoléon, a parliamentarian who is one of the targets of the Petit-Goâve opposition. Other journalists have been victims of the political polarization in Petit-Goâve. Pro-Thimoléon demonstrators. “We urge the local authorities to protect Petit-Goâve’s journalists, who are too often being identified and targeted as political actors at a time of considerable polarization,” said Camille Soulier, the head of the Reporters Without Borders Americas desk.

Rising violence against reporters in the United States

Concerned about the rising violence against U.S. journalists, the North American Committee of the International Press Institute convened a virtual Town Hall meeting on January 27, 2021. It brought together a broad cross-section of organizations, and local and national journalists on the front lines, for a conversation about how they are seeing these threats, to share ideas for remedies against these threats, and to begin to build a platform for cooperation and action to counteract them. The events of Jan. 6 in Washington crystalized the worsening atmosphere and threat to journalists in the United States from political extremists and conspiracy theorists. Words that were written on a door of the U.S. Capitol, “Murder the media,” by some of the armed protesters were a stark and frightening warning to all of us. Outside the Capitol that day, journalists were being roughed up and suffered verbal abuse for covering the riot. Equipment was seized and vandalized. And this kind of behavior has not been limited to Jan. 6, but across the United States, there has been a pattern over the past year of demonizing and blaming journalists as if we were the opposition and the enemy — a sentiment unfortunately amplified by the last president and some allied political leaders.

There are many other countries/case studies where similar violence and attacks against journalists are shown in the light of political motivation or other motives, namely: Latin American countries Mexico and Costa Rica, several European countries like Turkey, Germany, and in the Asia Pacific region Nepal, Philippines and India.

IMPORTANT: Please do note after careful consideration, our council will not be discussing any issues between Hong Kong and China in detail *in regards to the closing down of media outlets recently, for delegates’ safety and privacy.*

Possible Solutions

Implementation of safety measures

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.

Investment of resources regarding freedom of expression and press freedom

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.

Ombudsmen

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 the government as well as civilian attacks on the press.

Strengthening of national mechanisms for the protection of journalists

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 EastAfrica.

Past Actions

Listed below are some key past solutions prominent in shaping the current status quo of the debate:

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), adopted by the General Assembly in 1966. 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

Past case laws

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.

Guiding Questions

- Has the ICCPR been upheld in recent cases of journalist attacks and violation of freedom of the press?
- Are there any other legislations or actions taken in your delegated country to protect journalists and press freedom? If so, to what extent have they been successful?

- Has UNESCO, as a global organization, been successful in upholding its vision to protect journalists during times of protests and internalized battles?
- What are the loopholes in the solutions and past actions put forward to tackle the issue, how can you, as a delegation, protect journalists and the freedom of the press? Feel free to come up with innovative resolutions and actions.
- What kind of politically motivated incentives led to the amalgamation of the events presented in your respective delegations? How biased are they?
- What role does social media play in exemplifying the assaults against media workers?

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