**Forum:** UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural

Organisation

**Issue:** Safeguarding Freedom of Expression in Media and Journalism

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**Introduction**

Freedom is the cornerstone of societal development and stability. From allowing for the sharing of innovative ideas to the expression of each life and individual struggle it is freedom that has allowed society to grow as much as it has over the course of human history. Within the context of media and journalism this right plays a vital role in incentivizing debates, supporting informed decision making and ensuring transparency among communities. On the other hand, protecting this right and ensuring that each individual has access to it is an increasingly complex task with a multitude of niche problems and obstacles to overcome.

Journalists all over the world come face to face with threats to this right such as political interference, censorship and even legal action being taken against them. The rise of restrictive legislation in certain regions has only exacerbated the issue, limiting the ability of journalists to report on matters worldwide in an objective manner. Digital media also, although often times unrecognized, faces forms of oppression that limit an individual’s ability to freely express themselves. While online media platforms offer unprecedented opportunities for expression issues such as online harassment and more subtly, biased algorithms that will flag or even outright take down certain content.

This research report is designed to provide a detailed outlook on the issue of safeguarding freedom of speech in media and journalism. Presenting real world sources and genuine evidence to support a front against the ongoing oppression of expression and to ensure a valid and strong counterattack can be organized to provide the masses with their right to freedom of expression without fear of repercussions or consequences. Collaboration on a global scale will undoubtedly be the focal point in eradicating this issue and ensuring a safer, more free life for the future of humanity.

**Definition of Key Terms**

**Freedom of Speech:**

The right to express opinions without censorship or restraint.

**Freedom of the Press:**

The right of a media organization to operate individually without being controlled by the government.

**Misinformation:**

Untrue information being spread without the intent to cause harm but still contributing to misunderstandings.

**Disinformation:**

False information being spread with the harmful intention of deliberately deceiving or manipulating audiences

**Journalistic Integrity:**

The adherence to ethical and moral standards such as impartiality and objectivity in reporting

**Media Literacy:**

An individuals ability to understand the role of media content in society and critically evaluate it

**Authoritarianism:**

Political systems characterized by strong central control, often leading to limitations on press freedom

**Background Information**

Freedom of expression. One of the fundamental human rights mentioned in article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This basic human right is a vital aspect of what constitutes most societies. Freedom of expression in the context of media and journalism is what allows for the fair and just reporting on issues worldwide without fear of persecution or repression.

**Historical context**

Amidst the growth and development of humanity, freedom of speech has seen many incredible breakthroughs. Notably through the invention of the printing press, the rise of liberal democracies and through the world becoming ever so interconnected with the development of social media and technology. On the other hand, freedom of expression has faced many struggles throughout the years with authoritarian systems and political regimes that aim to control the public as much as possible.

**Current Obstacles**

In recent years, the media landscape has undergone significant transformations with the constant and rapid technological advancement. While such digital platforms have greatly increased access to information, they have also lead to the manifestation of many obstacles for journalists and media outlets alike:

***Physical and Online Threats to Safety***

Journalists constantly face harassment from hateful comments online to physical threats such as imprisonment and even assassination. According to UNESCO over 1,200 journalists have been killed worldwide since 2006.

***Political Suppression***

Governments in various parts of the world use legislation and even targeted violence to silence any form of dissent. Authoritarian regimes often use terms such as “anti-terrorism” to stifle any investigative journalism.

**International Frameworks and Advocacy**

The protection of freedom of expression is largely supported by international organizations such as the UN, Reporters Without Borders and the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ). These bodies act as major backing towards protecting the rights of journalists and media outlets, allowing them to operate and report in an unbiased way.

**Balance Between Freedom and Responsibility**

The value of freedom of speech and expression is not to be undermined, however in specific cases where such expression may be inciting violence or sacrificing national security, then international law is in place to counteract that. The dilemma lies in guaranteeing that such measures do not impede legitimate journalism.

**Major Countries and Organizations Involved**

**United States of America**

The US (United States) government frequently supports programs that encourage and nurture press freedom globally through programs such as USAID (United States Agency for International Development)

The first amendment of the US constitution ensures the freedom of speech and guarantees the freedom of press

**United Kingdom**

The UK (United Kingdom) continuously supports efforts from around the world that support journalists through the Media Freedom Coalition

With the combined front of both Article 19 and the Thomas Reuters Foundation, the UK can boast much higher levels of freedom in press and journalism

**Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ)**

The CPJ provides financial and legal support alongside security to journalists at risk of any sort of harm ranging from physical to political

**Reporters Without Borders (RSF)**

Reporters Without Borders (RSF) is responsible for calculating and publishing the World Press Freedom Index and they consistently promote for the safety of journalists worldwide

**Timeline of Events**

| **Date** | **Description of Event** |
| --- | --- |
| 15th December 1791 | The first amendment in the declaration of independence is ratified |
| 10th December 1948 | Universal Declaration of human rights is established |
| 15th October 1984 | Journalist Henry Liu is assassinated in his home |
| 17th December 2010 | Arab spring begins and revolutionizes the MENA region |
| 3rd November 2013 | The first UN International Day to End Impunity for Crimes Against Journalists takes place |

**Relevant UN Treaties and Events**

Please do use either British or American spelling throughout your Research Report. When listing past UN Resolutions, it is suggested that you make use of bullet points and the specified format below:

* Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 10 December 1948 (217/A/III)
* United Nations Convention against Corruption, 31 October 2003 (58/4)
* Resolution on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity, 18 December 2013 (A/RES/68/163)

**Previous Attempts to solve the Issue**

Many attempts to solve the issue have been made from the regional level such as with the European Convention on Human Rights (1950) to the infamous and aforementioned Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and yet the issue of genuine and unbiased expression in media and journalism continues to fester

**Possible Solutions**

Possible solutions to said issue come in a vast range. One could consider the approach of providing journalists and reporters with security to minimize their safety risks. Another perspective one could adopt is in regards to keeping tabs on online accounts to ensure that verified information is being spread rather than lies. There is also of course always the path of opting for the opposite and instead becoming more strict with expression in media and journalism for the purposes of “not sabotaging national security”.

**Guiding Questions**

1. How is your delegation affected by this?
2. What are the most pressing threats faced by journalists and organizations?
3. How does your delegation intend to solve and/or combat the issue?
4. What are the underlying causes of crimes against journalists going unpunished?
5. How can global organizations work alongside regional ones to effectively eradicate this worldwide?
6. How can the safety and security of nations be preserved while also maintaining complete transparency through journalism and media

**Bibliography**

Hafez, Kai. “Journalism Ethics Revisited: A Comparison of Ethics Codes in Europe, North Africa, the Middle East, and Muslim Asia.” *Political Communication*, vol. 19, no. 2, Apr. 2002, pp. 225–50. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10584600252907461>.

Jamil, Sadia, and Prabhjot Sohal. “Reporting Under Fear and Threats: The Deadly Cost of Being a Journalist in Pakistan and India.” *World of Media Journal of Russian Media and Journalism Studies*, vol. 1, no. 2, June 2021, pp. 5–33. <https://doi.org/10.30547/worldofmedia.2.2021.1>.

Beckett, Charlie, and Robin Mansell. “Crossing Boundaries: New Media and Networked Journalism.” *Communication Culture and Critique*, vol. 1, no. 1, Feb. 2008, pp. 92–104. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1753-9137.2007.00010.x>.

**Appendix or Appendices**

Please include any materials that you may wish to Appendix in this section. Also, Roman numerals must be used in labeling the different appendices. It is highly recommended that any useful links be placed in this section.

For Example:

1. <https://internews.org/blog/five-challenges-for-journalism/> (Five Challenges Face by Journalists)

5 quick and simple yet detailed challenges faced by journalists in this day and age

1. <https://www.brookings.edu/events/the-consequences-of-misinformation-a-symposium-on-media-and-democracy/> (Consequences of Misinformation)

Longer form videos that go more in depth about the issues that arise from this issue

1. <https://ipi.media/strengthening-press-freedom-at-home-and-abroad-10-recommendations-for-the-worlds-democracies/> (Strengthening freedom in press)

Provides 10 recommendations for how to increase press freedom

1. <https://www.mediadefence.org/ereader/publications/modules-on-litigating-freedom-of-expression-and-digital-rights-in-south-and-southeast-asia/module-1-key-principles-of-international-law-and-freedom-of-expression/the-right-to-freedom-of-expression-under-international-law/> (Key Principles of International Law and Freedom of Expression)

Multiple in-depth pages worth of all encompassing knowledge on the topic

1. <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/8/e/31230.pdf> (Why Free Media Matters)

Short file with background knowledge on the issue and the importance of freedom of speech in media