



UNODC

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

UNODC Inputs to the Secretary General's Report on the *Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity*

As stated in paragraph 1.6 of the *UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity*, addressing the root causes of violence against journalists requires effective frameworks for the rule of law, specifically aimed at dealing with issues such as corruption and organised crime. Indeed, journalists reporting on corruption and organized crime face victimisation by organised crime groups and corrupt authorities. As the guardian of the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime as well as the UN Convention against Corruption, UNODC is committed to promoting responsible and professional reporting on corruption and crime. Silencing a journalist denies the rights of the journalist and jeopardises the right of society to be informed. A free and independent media plays a key role in investigating and exposing corruption and crime. In its efforts to address the safety of journalists in its programmatic work, UNODC has implemented the following actions covering the reporting period.

Human Trafficking

In collaboration with the Arab Initiative to Build National Capacities to Combat Human Trafficking in the Arab Countries, in 2017, UNODC launched a *Human Trafficking Toolkit for Journalists*, with the aim to provide the media with a valuable instrument that helps them portray the complex nature of human trafficking in a fair, balanced and ethical manner. The toolkit focuses on human trafficking in the Arab region, a region where this crime is an issue that is especially challenging for journalists because of the lack of sufficient official data, as well as the complicated nature of migration flows and labour markets. Additionally, the toolkit provides concrete guidelines on self-protection and data-protection, including the protection of sources, acknowledging that journalism remains a dangerous profession in many countries where organized crime and corrupt authorities threaten the life and the work of those who seek to uncover the truth. Specific areas covered by the document include creating awareness of country-specific laws, dealing with threats and surveillance, the issue of internet security and the need to work in groups to ensure safety in numbers, and the need to recognise the specific challenges faced by women journalists. In follow up to the publishing of the toolkit, UNODC delivered specialised trainings to journalists in Algiers and New York in April and October 2018 respectively. These trainings not only enhanced the knowledge among participants on reporting trafficking in persons cases, but also provided guidance on security risks and ethical considerations around reporting stories of trafficked persons, including the issue of retaliation by organized criminal groups.

Corruption

Journalists that investigate corruption cases often risk their lives and are subjected to threats and violence. As part of its Sahel Strategy to counter corruption, UNODC has supported the establishment of the Cell Norbert Zongo for Investigative Journalism in West Africa (CENOZO), and its online platform which was launched in May 2018. CENOZO is a ground-breaking project for data collection and cross-border investigation in the region, inspired by one of West Africa's most notable journalists, Norbert Zongo, who was killed under suspicious circumstances while carrying out his work. CENOZO brings together over 50 journalists from across West Africa and

works towards strengthening the capacities of investigative journalists in the region through training, mentoring, grants, networking, legal advice, technical support for investigations, and provision of a publication platform. UNODC supported the initial training of journalists, as well as the development of CENOZO's strategic plan and its initial constitutive documents. Additionally, specialised training provided to journalists included cybersecurity and safety matters, which enhanced journalists' capacity to protect themselves and their sources by using secured communication tools. With support from UNODC and various other international partners, CENOZO has turned into an organization with a mandate to support investigative journalists in the region and improve their professional standards in the media landscape. So far, the collaborative work of this dynamic regional network of journalists has resulted in the publishing of over 45 investigative reports since 2018, exposing corruption cases, illicit financial flows, organised crime and trafficking under the hashtag #WestAfricaLeaks. Some of these stories have already succeeded in triggering the interest of national investigative bodies in West Africa, and on World Press Freedom Day 2019, CENOZO called on the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to do more to protect journalists and commit to ensuring their safety.

Advocating for the Safety of Journalists

According to latest figures provided in the 2017/2018 UNESCO report on *Global Trends in Freedom of Expression and Media Development*, Mexico is one of the most dangerous countries for journalists. Given the importance of the topic in Mexico, the links between freedom of speech, and organized crime and the fight against impunity are of utmost concern to UNODC, and in 2019, UNODC co-organised the second edition of the Breach-Valdez Prize in journalism and human rights, which aims to support and honour all journalists in Mexico who risk their lives every day covering organised crime and human rights abuses. The Breach-Valdez Prize is named in recognition of Mexican journalists Miroslava Breach and Javier Valdez, who were killed in 2017 by organised crime groups in retaliation for their coverage of Mexico's drug trade. The award ceremony, which took place on World Press Freedom Day on 3 May 2019, contributed to the aims of the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists to advocate for the situation of media freedom, and strengthened partnerships between the UN and civil society organizations and professional associations dedicated to monitoring the safety of journalists.