



International Federation of Journalists

الاتحاد الدولي للصحفيين

IFJ Arab World and Iran Regional Meeting

Casablanca 19 – 21 May 2008

Conclusions and Recommendations

Journalists and representatives of national journalists' unions, syndicates and associations from throughout the region met in Casablanca for three days to discuss the current challenges facing media professionals and their journalists' unions. The meeting reviewed the work of the IFJ and its affiliates in the region and the progress made on the five key campaign areas set out in Beirut (2006) and Algiers (2007)

1. Solidarity in Crisis Conditions

2. Breaking the Chains – A Campaign for Open Government and Legal Reform

3. Editorial Independence and Quality Media

4. Trade Union Freedom and Social Rights

5. Gender equality

1. Solidarity in Crisis Conditions

The meeting paid tribute to the seventy six journalists recorded by the IFJ as killed in the region for their professional work during 2007. Participants paid particular tribute to their close colleague and former President of the Iraqi Journalists' Union, Shihab Al Tamimi, assassinated in Baghdad in February 2008 on leaving an IJU board meeting planning the first national safety seminar for Iraqi journalists; to Palestinian photographer Fadel Shana, killed by the Israeli army in Gaza last month; and to Sudanese journalist Mohamed Taha Ahmed killed in 2006 for his writings. The meeting also welcomed the release of Sami al-Haj, Al Jazeera cameraman held in Guantanamo for six years and thanked all the unions and organisations that participated in the campaigns for his release.





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The meeting commended the work of the IFJ's global campaign against impunity for journalists' killers and its actions to improve the security of journalists in the region. In particular it endorsed the ongoing programme of work in Iraq to strengthen the Iraqi Media Security Group with the Iraqi and Kurdish Journalists' Unions and to expand its work to open further offices in Irbil and Basra.

The meeting called on governments to ease the visa regulations impeding the free movement of all journalists in the region after the failure of the representatives of the Iraqi Journalists' Union to attend. Participants sent a message of solidarity to the Iraqi Journalists' Union in recognition of their work conducted in the most extreme conditions.

The meeting condemned the growing violence in Palestine and attacks on journalists caused by the Israeli occupation and called for all sides to respect the rights of all Palestinian journalists to work freely.

The meeting commended the joint campaigns of the IFJ, The NUJ of Great Britain and Ireland and the Palestinian Journalists Syndicate in its efforts to secure the release of BBC correspondent Alan Johnston held hostage in Gaza for three months in 2007.

The meeting welcomed the announcement of the PJS to organize its congress by the end of 2008 and called on the IFJ to continue to support the PJS programme to strengthen the Palestinian Journalists Syndicate. It further called on all international organisations to support the work of the PJS in defending Palestinian journalists.

The meeting condemned the growing violence against journalists in Somalia and congratulated the efforts of the National Union of Somali Journalists in its effective campaign to raise global awareness of the plight of Somali media professionals.

The meeting sent its solidarity and support to the National Syndicate of Tunisian Journalists and condemned the defamation campaign orchestrated by newspapers close to the government.

Finally the meeting called on the IFJ to continue to work with the International News Safety Institute to develop a comprehensive regional safety programme for journalists.





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2. Breaking the Chains – A Campaign for Open Government and Legal Reform

The meeting revised and approved the Breaking the Chains Report. The meeting discussed the regional campaign and agreed the following:

- To formally launch the report across the region;
- To strengthen regional solidarity and to co-ordinate rapid response solidarity actions in support of journalists as cases emerge;
- To plan a region wide day of solidarity in October. Each journalists' union will organize a public event focusing on key cases in their country and drawing attention to the Breaking the Chains report and plight of journalists throughout the region;
- To use the IFJ Arabic website to communicate national and regional campaigns and to raise the profile and visibility of actions by IFJ affiliates including the promotion of their national press freedom reports;
- To organize a regional campaigning workshop before the end of the year to prepare the next report and co-ordinate the next stage of the campaign including a further solidarity day of action around 3rd May 2009 to be celebrated by UNESCO in Doha, Qatar.
- To update the report on a quarterly basis.
- To request a meeting with the Federation of Arab Journalists to strengthen co-operation with the FAJ press freedom committee and Media Observatory

The meeting issued a call to all governments to release all imprisoned journalists without delay.

3. Editorial Independence and Quality Media





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The meeting welcomed the IFJ's Ethical Journalism Initiative. It agreed to organize a regional conference on the EJI to debate how to apply it to the region. The United Arab Emirates Journalists Association offered to host the conference.

The EJI working group considered the following issues

- How do we define the core values of journalism?
- Are there any limits to press freedom?
- What are the responsibilities of unions in promoting ethical standards?
- Are we opening the door to government for more interference in media?
- What are the structures that can be used to promote high professional standards?
- How is gender equality to be included in the EJI?

The meeting agreed to form a committee to develop the discussions points and topics for the regional conference and to invite key experts and intellectuals to prepare papers on the core concepts. The Bahrain Journalists' Association offered to host the committee meeting that consists of the following participants.

Abdullah Bakkali – SNPM

Sherko Habib – KJS

Tariq al Amer – BJA

Naim Toubasi – PJS

Neji Bghouri – SNJT

Saeed Thabit – YJS

Aashour Alttilisi - LJA

Adnan Madahka – KJA

The meeting further issued a statement on the Arab League guidelines for regulation of satellite television expressing its deep concern that this may lead to undue interference in the content of broadcast news and information and will compromise editorial independence. (see annex)

4. Trade Union Freedom and Social Rights

The meeting endorsed the IFJ's trade union capacity building programme. It made the following recommendations

1. To draft a model collective agreement to define minimum conditions





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2. To establish a study on journalists trade unions in the Arab World
3. To research ownership of media in the region
4. To launch an information campaign to raise awareness of International labour standards, UN / ILO conventions and other international agreements ratified by countries within the region that protect labour and social rights.
5. To list the different trade union training services that can be provided by the IFJ.

5. Gender equality

The meeting endorsed the conclusions of the regional gender working group meeting in Tunisia in April and agreed to support the regional campaign to improve the presence of women in leadership positions in journalists' unions and the media. The meeting further regretted the lack of women participants at the Casablanca meeting and recommended that in 2009 a special gender workshop be organized in parallel with the annual meeting to increase participation of women.

Future Organisation

The participants discussed the future of the organisation of the Arab World and Iran and a committee was established to lead further discussions.

The meeting issued further statements enclosed in the appendix on the following:

- Arab League Broadcasting Guidelines
- Imprisoned journalist Al Kaiwanhi (Yemen)
- Ban on Alwan Newspaper (Sudan)
- Violence against journalists (Somalia)
- Imprisoned journalist Slim Boukhdar (Tunisia)
- Imprisoned journalist Mostapha Hurmatallah (Morocco)

Finally, participants expressed their thanks to the Syndicat National de la Presse Marocaine and to the





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Friedrich Ebert Stiftung for hosting the event.





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ANNEXS

ANNEX 1

Regional Journalists Back IFJ Call to Arab League Over Interference in Broadcasting

Journalists' Unions and Associations representing 12 different countries from throughout the Arab World and Iran meeting in Casablanca at a regional meeting of the International Federation of Journalists today added their support to the following IFJ statement:

The IFJ notes the statement from information ministers of the Arab League concerning guidelines for regulation of satellite television. The IFJ is extremely concerned that intervention may lead to undue interference in the content of broadcast news and information, will introduce tighter restrictions on press freedom and further compromise editorial independence in the news rooms.

The IFJ further notes the statements by Arab League representatives at the recent Arab Media Forum in Kuwait where it was clearly stated that these guidelines are not intended to be obligatory rules to be implemented without respect for editorial freedom and independence of journalists.

However, the IFJ is concerned that recent actions in some countries suggest that initial fears of governmental interference are well founded with some governments enforcing unacceptable restrictions on broadcast activity.

The IFJ believes there should be urgent action by the Arab League to further clarify these guidelines to prevent unwarranted interference in media. The IFJ agrees to seek an urgent meeting with senior representatives of the Arab League to resolve this matter and to work with the Federation of Arab Journalists in the organisation of a joint meeting.





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Annex 2

Journalists Unions from the Arab World and Iran call for Yemen journalist, Al Khaiwani, to be cleared of Terrorism Charges

Journalists' Unions and Associations representing twelve different countries from throughout the Arab World and Iran meeting in Casablanca at a regional meeting of the International Federation of Journalists today called upon the Yemeni authorities to drop charges against journalist Al Khaiwani and to take measures to guarantee his safety.

This call is also supported by the National Union of Journalists in the United Kingdom and Ireland, the Deutscher Journalisten-Verband, and Deutsche Journalistinnen- und Journalisten-Union (dju) in ver.di and the East African Journalists' Association.

Ten months ago Al Khaiwani, editor in chief of Al Shora newspaper and Al Shora Net, was charged with association to a terrorist group by a state security court. His trial concluded two weeks ago and the judgment is expected to be announced on Wednesday 21st May.

The IFJ and its affiliate, the Yemeni Journalists Syndicate, believe he is being prosecuted for his professional work. The prosecution claimed that photos found in his possession demonstrate his association with a terrorist group, but the IFJ and YJS believe that the photos were obtained through an intermediary and as part of his legitimate journalistic investigations.

Since he was charged Al Khaiwani has also received different threats some of which made while he was in the court room.

The IFJ urges the Yemen legal system to clear Al Khaiwani of all charges and to enhance its independence and distance itself from the political mobilisation against independent and opposition journalists.

The IFJ is repeating its calling on the Yemeni president to stop all harassment Al Khaiwani is subjected to and to protect him and guarantee his safety.





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Annex 3: Sudan

IFJ and Journalists Unions in the Arab World and Iran calling on the Sudanese Authorities to left the Ban and Confiscation order on Alwan Newspaper

الاتحاد الدولي للصحفيين ونقابات الصحفيين في العالم العربي وايران يطالبون السلطات السودانية برفع الحظر والمصادرة عن صحيفة "الوان"

يطالب الاتحاد الدولي للصحفيين والاتحادات، والجمعيات، والنقابات بالعالم العربي وايران في اجتماعهم المنعقد بمدينة الدار البيضاء بالمغرب 19-21 من شهر أيار/مايو الجاري، السلطات السودانية برفع قرار الحظر والايقاف والمصادرة بحق صحيفة "الوان" السودانية اليومية وضرورة الالتزام بالاجراءات القانونية واحترام حق الشعب في المعرفة وتدعيم الحريات الصحافية مع المطالبة على عدم تعرض المسؤولين بالجريدة لاي اجراءات تعسفية مع حفظ حقوق العاملين بالجريدة، وعدم الاضرار بمصالحهم ومصالح اسرهم وكسبهم المعيشي ويطالبوا بتحقيق هذا الطلب فورا.

Annex 4

Journalists Unions from the Arab World and Iran Denounce Violence against Somalia Journalists

We, journalists' leaders representing journalists' trade unions and associations from Arab World and Iran at the Regional Conference of the International Federation of Journalists in Casablanca, Morocco, from 19th to 21st May 2008, are deeply concerned about increased frequency of acts of violence against journalists, media professionals and associated media personnel in Somalia.

The multifaceted crisis of politics, economy, security, and governance in Somalia present severe challenges to the media professionals. Journalists have paid a heavy price for reporting on Somalia's long-standing conflict, as deadly attacks on media professionals have increased unprecedentedly.

We denounce targeted attacks by all parties to the conflict to endanger security of journalists and restrict freedom of the press in Somalia. We stand in solidarity with Somali colleagues.

Press freedom situation in Somalia deteriorated enormously as cycles of suppression and violence against journalists are rising day after day. We recall authorities in Somalia to adhere to





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obligations under international law to respect and protect journalists as civilians and end culture of impunity for crimes committed against media professionals by prosecuting those responsible for these violations.

Annex 5: Tunisia

Journalists Unions from the Arab World and Iran Call on the Tunisian Authorities to release the Imprisoned Journalists Slim Boukhdir

مناشدة للسلطات التونسية

نحن نقابات الصحفيين الممثلين لإثني عشر دولة من الشرق الاوسط وشمال افريقيا, المجتمعون بالدار البيضاء ايام 19-21 ماي 2008 في لقاء أقليمي في اطار الاتحاد الدولي للصحفيين، نناشد السلطات التونسية الافراج عن الصحفي سليم بوخدير المعتقل منذ 26 نوفمبر 2007 والذي يقضي عقوبة بالسجن لمدة عام في ظروف سجنية صعبة.

Annex 6: Morocco

Journalists Unions from the Arab World and Iran Support the Imprisoned Moroccan Journalist Mostapha Hurmatallah

اتحادات ونقابات وجمعيات الصحفيين في العالم العربي يتضامنون مع الصحفي المغربي المعتقل مصطفى حرمة الله

يعلن الاتحاد الدولي للصحفيين والاتحادات، والجمعيات، والنقابات بالعالم العربي وايران في اجتماعهم المنعقد بمدينة الدار البيضاء بالمغرب 19-21 من شهر أيار/مايو الجاري عن تضامنهم مع الصحفي المغربي المعتقل مصطفى حرمة الله، ويناشدون السلطات المغربية بالعمل على اطلاق سراحه فورا وإلغاء الأحكام الصادرة في حقه وحق زميله عبد الرحيم أريري مدير جريدة الوطن الآن، ويعتبر اللقاء الإقليمي بأن الصحافيين حرمة الله وعبد الرحيم أريري لم يقوموا إلا بواجبهما المهني في الإخبار.





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List of participants - Unions

From the Arab World and Iran:

1. Syndicat National des Journalistes - Algeria
2. Bahrain Journalists' Association
3. Association of Iranian Journalists
4. Kurdistan Journalists' Syndicate
5. Kuwait Journalists' Association
6. Syndicat national de la presse marocaine
7. Palestinian Journalists Syndicate
8. Sudanese Union of Journalists
9. Syndicat National des Journalistes tunisiens
10. Journalists Association - United Arab Emirates
11. Yemen Journalists Syndicate
12. National Union of Somali Journalists (NUSOJ)
13. Libyan Journalists Association

From Europe:

1. Deutsche Journalistinnen- und Journalisten-Union (dju) in ver.di - Germany
2. DJV - Deutscher Journalisten-Verband - Germany





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3. National Union of Journalists of UK and Ireland - Great Britain

