



## INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION OF JOURNALISTS

### Message to the 29th IFJ Congress in Angers, France, on 7–10 June 2016

Dear delegates – fellow journalists!

On this occasion we are invited to recall the history of our international movement. It is indeed a long and complicated story. The movement started over 120 years ago in 1894, when the first international conference of “press people” took place in Antwerp. But it took until after World War I for the first proper association of professional journalists to be established in 1926 with the encouragement of the International Labour Organization ILO and the League of Nations. It took as its name *Fédération Internationale des Journalistes* (FIJ) and its secretariat was located in Paris. The FIJ was destroyed by the German army’s occupation of France in 1940. During World War II the movement was hosted by the British Union of Journalists, which helped to set up the *International Federation of Journalists of Allied or Free Countries*. This federation in exile organized new beginning for the movement in 1946 in Copenhagen, where the *International Organization of Journalists* (IOJ) was founded among Europeans together with Russians, Americans and Australians – as the legal successor of the FIJ.

The Cold War since the late 1940s led to a split in the movement, whereby the Western member unions left the IOJ and in 1952 established a new association, the present *International Federation of Journalists* (IFJ). Meanwhile, the IOJ consolidated itself in Eastern Europe and spread to the developing world. The world of journalist associations was divided between the Prague-based IOJ and the Brussels-based IFJ, with some, like the French and the Finns, having membership of both. The two internationals followed the Cold War division between “Communist East” and “Free West” leading to a politicization of the movement and a competition for new associations in the Third World.

The two world associations began to cooperate on common professional issues only in the 1970s, when a spirit of détente entered international politics. Bridge builders were especially the Italian and Finnish associations with a strategy for maximal unity of the international movement of professional journalists. This development was supported by UNESCO, leading to consultative meetings between the IOJ, IFJ and regional associations in Africa, Asia and Latin America, with joint measures in many professional questions, including ethics and safety of journalists. By 1991 both world associations were ready to negotiate on how to achieve a unity of the movement.


However, the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union led in the IOJ to a deterioration of what used to be the world’s largest international organization of journalists and the IOJ withered into a nominal entity. Meanwhile, the IFJ grew in size and importance as most IOJ members joined it while retaining their formal membership in the IOJ. By the end of the millennium the movement had reverted to the pre-Cold World War situation, when journalists from all continents and geopolitical areas had effectively one platform for cooperation – first the FIJ and then the IOJ.

Today it is obvious that the IFJ is the sole representative of professional journalists around the world. This does not mean that the IFJ is the direct successor of the pre-war FIJ, whose legal heritage was passed to the IOJ. On this occasion of the 29th IFJ Congress in 2016 it is important that the IFJ perceives itself correctly in history as a successor of both the pre-war FIJ and the post-war IOJ. While celebrating the 90th anniversary of the founding of the FIJ, we should not forget that a common IOJ was founded in Copenhagen exactly 70 years ago, on 3–9 June 1946 – with high hopes, until it was split by the unfortunate Cold War.

Dear colleagues,

As the President of the IOJ and its Honorary President elected in the last IOJ Congress in Amman in 1995, we note that the historical development has led to a natural demise of the IOJ as an operational organization. While closing this page in history, we are pleased to pass on to the IFJ the heritage of the pre-war FIJ. We wish you every success in taking good care of this valuable heritage.

Amman and Maputo, 3 June 2016



Suleiman Al-Qudah, IOJ President



Manuel Tomé, IOJ Honorary President