



## An Exchange between Journalists' Unions and Broadcasters in the Mediterranean

Paris, 31 March – 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015

### Conclusions

Representatives of Journalists unions, broadcasters and media professionals from across the Mediterranean region came together to debate the threats to freedom of expression and independent journalism posed by the violence against journalism across the region.

Organised in response to the January killings at Charlie Hebdo, the International Federation of Journalists, the three French journalists unions of SNJ, SNJ-CGT and Cfdt, and supported by the MedMedia, a programme funded by the European Union, it brought together leading journalists and experts to Paris on 31<sup>st</sup> march and 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015.

Participants at the meeting declared:

- Their complete solidarity with the French journalists unions and all victims of the Paris attacks;
- Their unequivocal condemnation of all violence against journalists and the growing horrors facing journalists across North Africa and the Middle East targeted by violent extremism;
- Their commitment to defence of freedom of expression and independent journalism as essential to the building of healthy democracies
- Their belief that journalism, to fulfil its public service role, must follow the highest ethical standards in telling the truth, maintaining its neutrality and minimising harm
- Their condemnation of extremist ideology that targets journalists and freedom of expression as part of their assault on democratic values based on human rights

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- Further condemns the purveyors of racist ideologies that abuse freedom of expression as a means for expressing intolerant messages and inciting hatred between communities;
- Their rejection of cost cutting, and anti-labour employment practices that force journalists into precarious, poorly paid and under resourced conditions that offers low cost, low quality information.
- Their denouncement of the austerity policies adopted by governments on public broadcasting and media subsidies that put the future of journalism in peril. Further condemn employers who have implemented excessive cuts to maintain their short term profits at the expense of quality and the long term future of the profession.

## Recommendations

In response the participants called for the following:

- Reinvigoration of a culture of safety throughout the media including, training, equipment, insurance, and the prosecution of those who threaten or use violence against media. Specifically the IFJ should expand its co-operation with UNESCO to support the [UN Safety plan](#).
- Reassertion of principles of freedom of expression as a fundamental right of all citizens and duty of journalists necessary to conduct their roles in exposing the abuse and corruption of power. Specifically calling for:
  - The freeing of all prisoners jailed for their journalism
  - The decriminalisation of journalism through the reform of laws that stifle journalism, for example the decriminalisation of defamation.
  - Guarantee of the right to information in national laws and constitutions
  - Campaigns against governments exploiting public security fears to introduce oppressive anti-terror legislation, such as the Patriotic Act currently debated in France that can be used to limit journalism.
- Promotion of a programme of tolerance and dialogue to combat stereotypes through
  - Creating a news room profile that reflects the society about which it reports by encouraging access to journalism schools and the profession from minority, disadvantaged and marginalised communities
  - Improving journalism standards through establishing professional codes of conduct and structures for dialogue around ethical issues
  - Organising media exchanges across the Mediterranean to improve news values
  - Promoting and recognising the best talent in journalism that promotes and celebrates multicultural inclusive values.
- Public Service Broadcasters
  - Campaign to defend the models and principles of public service media and ensure that PSB remains guaranteed by the European Court of Human rights (in Europe), that the funding is secured and not threatened with closure as in Greece or Portugal.
  - Ensure that the transition of state broadcasters into PSBs remains a priority of the European Union's Neighbourhood Policy
  - Strengthen media regulators' independence and the funding of PSB.
- Challenge the undermining of labour standards by
  - Lobbying the International Labour Organisation on minimum labour standards in media together with the International Federations representing musicians and actors

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- Joining forces with the International Trade Union Centre (ITUC) and Uni Global Union to address the problems in transnational media.
- Lobbying for the importance of maintaining journalism as a public good through a combination of public service media, subsidies and other innovative methods
- Lobbying for the rights of freelance journalists to the same conditions as staff and the same ability to be represented by a trade union.
- Lobbying for anti-concentration of media ownership laws to guarantee a pluralism of ideas and opinions in the media.

The meeting then called on the journalist unions, the International Federation of Journalists, the public broadcasters and the MedMedia programme to develop concrete measures to support the objectives outlined above.

**Finally, participants expressed their solidarity with the journalists and media employees currently on strike in Radio France against budget cuts that threaten up to 300 jobs.**

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