

May 2, 2014

To the High Commission for Human Rights:

The Committee to Protect Journalists has prepared the following brief in response to your request for information regarding the efforts by member states to prevent violence against journalists and media workers, ensure accountability for acts of anti-press violence, and promote a safe environment for the media to work independently and without undue interference.

[CPJ](#), a non-governmental press freedom watchdog, systematically collects information related to journalists [killed](#) in relation to their work and whether their killers are brought to [justice](#); journalist [imprisonments](#); cases of [exiled](#) journalists; and other [threats](#) to press freedom. We publish these data in the form of news alerts, protest letters, blog posts, special reports, and our annual publication, [Attacks on the Press](#). The responses below summarize some of the key findings from our work.

Despite increased attention by the international community and member states—since the adoption of the U.N. Plan of Action for Security of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity in 2012—to journalist killings, there has been very little progress made in both limiting the number of journalists imprisoned or killed and in bringing those killers to justice.

In 2013, CPJ documented 70 journalists killed in relation to their work, just four fewer than the organization documented in 2012. Most of those [killed in 2013](#) covered politics (67 percent) or war (51 percent) or human rights (46 percent). Nearly half (44 percent) worked online. This year, at least 14 journalists have already been [killed](#) in relation to their work. CPJ research shows that broadcast reporters, camera operators, and photographers make up the largest percentages of journalists killed in 2014.

Most journalist killings continue to go uninvestigated, and most states do not make an effort to report on the status of judicial inquiry. CPJ's [Impunity Index](#) tracks the countries where journalist murders are most likely to remain unresolved. In fewer than 5 percent of cases are the masterminds of journalist killings ever apprehended and prosecuted.

The 13 countries on CPJ's Index met the threshold of having five or more unsolved murders of journalists over the past decade. CPJ research shows that murders of journalists continue in most of the states that appear on the Index each year. Ten of the countries on the Index have been listed each year since 2008, and in eight countries, new murders took place in 2013. Pakistan and Iraq, both of which are first phase countries for the U.N. Action Plan

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implementation, have consistently been on the list. These trends underscore the challenge of reversing entrenched impunity and highlight how a climate of impunity engenders further violence.

In four countries on the Index, convictions did take place—including in Pakistan, which previously had a near-perfect record of impunity. Pakistani authorities convicted six suspects in connection with a 2011 journalist murder; a Brazil court convicted perpetrators of three journalist murders; while the Philippines and Russia each convicted one journalist murderer. While such convictions are an important step, the fact that in nearly all cases the masterminds remain at large indicates a lack of follow-through on commitments under the Action Plan. Brazil convicted a mastermind in one case last year, but CPJ research shows that this is an anomaly.

According to CPJ data, political groups, including armed factions, are the suspected perpetrators in more than 40 percent of murder cases. Government and military officials are considered the leading suspects in 26 percent of the cases. Furthermore, given that victims in almost two of every five journalist murders reported receiving threats before they were killed, authorities should play a more active role in ensuring that when such threats are reported they are taken seriously and investigated.

Despite the imperatives of the U.N. Action Plan, many states remain reticent about the status of investigations into the killings of journalists, suggesting that in many cases there is no follow-up. For example, the UNESCO director general asks states to voluntarily report on the status of judicial inquiries into journalist killings. Less than half respond at all, and most report only that inquiries are ongoing and provide little detail. The lack of forthright response and provision of basic information to the public about the status of investigations by governments show a lack of commitment to implementing the U.N. Action Plan or the UNGA Resolution on the Safety of Journalists and Issue of Impunity. More explicit tracking and transparency about the status of investigations would be an important step to take in order to demonstrate this commitment.

Not only have killings of journalists continued largely unabated since the U.N. Action Plan was launched, but imprisonments of journalists have been at historic highs, with 2012 and 2013 representing the worst years for journalists since CPJ began keeping detailed records. Most of the 211 journalists [imprisoned](#) in 2013 were convicted of anti-state charges, although many times the charges are never even revealed.

Worldwide in late 2013, 124 journalists were jailed on anti-state charges such as subversion or terrorism, a number far higher than any other type of charge, such as defamation or insult. Just over half of the 211 journalists imprisoned



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in late 2013 worked online. Egypt, Jordan, Russia, Bangladesh, Kuwait, Macedonia, Pakistan, Republic of Congo, and the United States appeared on CPJ's 2013 prison census. The additions represent a disturbing expansion of countries' use of imprisonment to silence critical voices, especially online.

The U.N. Action Plan has provided an important normative framework for addressing the safety of journalists and the issue of impunity, but much remains to be done with respect to implementation. Similarly, the environment for press freedom remains constrained by the prevalence of restrictive laws, including criminal defamation and anti-state provisions, and expanding restrictions on free expression online. Detailed analyses of these threats are featured in CPJ's annual *Attacks on the Press* and indicate minimal consistent progress. We urge the OHCHR to monitor member states' progress in implementing both the spirit and the letter of the U.N. Action Plan and the UNGA Resolution on Safety of Journalists.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Courtney Radsch', is written over a light grey horizontal line.

Courtney Radsch
CPJ Advocacy Director

CC List:

Sylvie Coudray, chief, Freedom of Expression, Communication and Information Sector,
UNESCO