

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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MESSAGE ON THE INTERNATIONAL DAY TO END IMPUNITY FOR CRIMES AGAINST JOURNALISTS 2 November 2016

Attacks on journalists violate the human rights of individuals and undermine freedom of information and expression across societies. Impunity, which makes this terrible situation worse, is rampant. Of the 827 documented killings of journalists over the past decade, the information at hand shows that only 8 percent of perpetrators were held to account.

I pay tribute to the courage of all media personnel who put their lives on the line for the sake of truth. And I call for immediate action to secure justice in cases where journalists were attacked, harassed or killed.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is mobilizing all partners to implement the United Nations Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity. Success hinges on cooperation to create a culture of freedom of expression, where those who restrict the work of journalists are sanctioned and all who attack them are punished.

Toward this end, I call on all countries to mark the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists with concrete actions to ensure that all media personnel are guaranteed the space they need to operate free from any form of harassment or intimidation. In this way, we will strengthen public access to information, which is key to the Sustainable Development Goals. Informed participation in decision-making by all advances sustainable development, building resilient, stable and just societies.

Commemorative activities will be held in a variety of places around the world, including Myanmar, which will officially mark the Day for the first time as part of its transition toward democracy with discussions at the Annual Media Development Conference. In the Russian Federation, UNESCO is teaming up with the Russian Union of Journalists to examine prevailing conditions, honour those who have lost their lives and raise awareness about ending impunity. In Pakistan, UNESCO is joining with officials in a discussion focused on strengthening the safety of journalists. In Tanzania, UNESCO is working with officials to hold a workshop commemorating the Day.

I urge all countries to observe this Day, especially where journalists are under threat. Let us resolve to do all we can to contribute to a safer environment for journalists and a freer society for all.