

COMMITTEE TO PROTECT JOURNALISTS  
**RECLAIMING THE PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS UNDER INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW**  
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*As prepared for delivery*

The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) supports the rights of journalists to report without fear of reprisals. CPJ documents hundreds of cases every year and takes action on behalf of journalists and news organizations around the world.

I am pleased that the important role of journalists as documenters of conflict, their rights and need for protection have been affirmed by speakers at this conference. The immense risks and consequences journalists face also have been noted, as well as the impunity in attacks against journalists. For CPJ, this is a crucial issue.

The reality is that around the world the vast majority of journalists killed covering conflict is working in their own countries. They are not war correspondents in the traditional sense. They are covering human rights abuses, political corruption, and crime. They are not killed when they step on landmines or get caught in crossfire. They are hunted down and deliberately executed.

Also noted by the panel, is that in 9 out of 10 of these cases there is complete impunity in these crimes. The consequence of this impunity is that the cycle of violence is perpetuated and journalists are ultimately compelled to limit their coverage.

The presence of journalists raises awareness about the costs of war. The presence of media on the battlefield can act as a deterrent against the worst human rights abuses, while their reporting can enhance understanding and awareness about the grievances of the different parties, and their motives for fighting, and such awareness can, in turn, facilitate resolution of armed conflict.

But for this to happen - impunity must be addressed - by states, through global pressure and international mechanisms. The international community must demand justice. CPJ published an annual [global impunity index](#), listing countries who maintain the worst rates of convicting journalists' killers. The majority of those countries remain on the list year after year. Many are represented in this room. I hope we can engage on tackling this issue.

There are some other points I would like to raise. First, journalists who cover conflict are often put under intense pressure by non state and armed groups to give favorable coverage of one group's activities. They may be labeled as an enemy if they fail to do so. Some are accused by their own governments of anti state activities for reporting on activities of militant groups.

I have learned much yesterday and today about programs to train and educate armed parties in international humanitarian law and tactics to reduce harm to civilians. I would encourage that these initiatives also incorporate training and outreach that aims to clarify the role of journalists – both their right to protection as civilians and their need to conduct independent fair coverage of all sides of a conflict. These efforts should also put the work of journalists in the context of the changing media landscape, which relies increasingly heavily on freelancers, internet journalists and social media.

I would also highlight the need for the international community to act directly to protect journalists. In 2011, acting on concerns CPJ raised with contacts within the UN Secretary General's office, the UN mission in the Ivory Coast relocated 11 journalists under attack in Abidjan. This was a successful example, but a rare one. A direct means to engage UN agencies when a journalist is at imminent risk of harm would be useful.

I would also suggest the need for the principles that underlie international humanitarian law to be promoted and respected in post-conflict environments and that steps are taken to protect journalists, translators and other groups that may be vulnerable, with particular view to Afghanistan in 2014.

Finally - Last year the UN adopted the UN Plan of Action for the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity. This initiative proposes measures for stakeholders: governments, intergovernmental organizations, and media to uphold international humanitarian law, respect freedom of the media and lays out measures such as training, and development of protection programs to help journalists at risk. This framework should be integrated within ongoing discussion for protection of civilians in conflict.

Thank you.

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