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NHRC
National Human Rights Committee

**Recommendations of the International Conference to
Protect Journalists in dangerous situations**

We, representatives of media, human rights and freedom of expression groups and international, regional and national organizations of journalists meeting at the International Conference to Protect Journalists held in Doha, Qatar on 22-23 January 2012, organized by the Qatari National Committee for Human Rights (QNCHR).

Recalling all recommendations, covenants, declarations and resolutions promulgated or endorsed by international organizations such as the UN and the Geneva Conventions.

Noting all the global initiatives put forth by international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) concerned with the protection of journalists.

Recognizing the importance of media in increasing awareness of the violations of international humanitarian law and human rights.

Believing that the media and human rights organizations have a responsibility to help put an end to impunity by systematically publicizing crimes against journalists, investigating when necessary all violations and ensuring that perpetrators as well as failure of government to act are exposed.

Calling on all organizations representing journalists and NGOs concerned with the safety of journalists to work together in the broadest campaign to ensure great safety of journalists and bring an end to impunity for their killers and attackers.

Following the review of the conference of the current status of the media in dangerous situations and referring to protective measures provided by international law, discussing the idea of a draft convention for the protection of journalists in conflict zones and other dangerous situations.

Declare

* That although the United Nations and its agencies have a wide range of tools and instruments which can address the issue of safety, scores of journalists and media workers continue to be killed every year while carrying out their professional responsibilities. Many of such abuses are not investigated and remain unpunished.

* That renewed and urgent action is necessary to press for robust implementation to the existing mechanisms and procedures by increasing the effectiveness of monitoring and enforcement of the current instruments.

This Conference therefore recommends:

To the United Nations and its agencies

* Implement forth with their latest plan of action agreed at their Paris Autumn conference and enhance their working with specialized non-governmental organizations dedicated to the safety of journalists and media worker.

Develop new tools to bind all states to acknowledge and accept a standing obligation to provide particular safeguards and protection for journalists beyond the provisions of UN Security Council resolution reminding states of their obligations to give journalists protection in peacetime as in war.

1- Adopt ambitious reforms to its mechanisms and procedures such as through regional security organizations, expanding the mandates of Special Rapporteurs and concerned UN bodies, organizing emergency alerts and missions, considering intrusive inspections and mandatory sanctions – developing or renewing existing systems, developing further monitoring and peer review process and work towards an ultimate goal setting up an international treaty so that countries can collectively adopt a set of radical new measures to afford credible protection to journalists.

2 – Expand the current legal provisions beyond the obligations to protect journalists against attacks on their life, and include forced disappearances and kidnapping (by state or private actors), arbitrary arrest, intimidation, deportation/refusal of entry, confiscation/ damage to property, and new forms of violence experienced by journalists during the 2011 Arab spring, and further develop human rights council resolutions S-2/1 and S-9/1 concerning the attacks on media installations and allowing access as well as safe media corridors in conflict zones.

3 – Asking the Human Rights Council to appoint a special rapporteur on the protection of journalists, requesting the High Commissioner of Human Rights (HCHR) to create a unit to follow up media cases.

To Governments

1 – Respect the letter and spirit of all international instruments they signed up to, of the binding and non-binding resolutions, covenants and declarations of the United Nations.

2 – Include an assessment of other country's record when granting aid and other development assistance. International development institutions, such as the World Bank and International Monetary fund, should also scrutinize a country's record on violence journalists when assessing the granting of aid and other assistance.

3 – Strengthen national laws including criminal laws and overhaul justice system to end impunity and to provide judicial and legislative assistance to prevent serious violations of international humanitarian laws including the targeting of journalists.

4 – Agree that families of killed journalists have a right to compensation directly or through media institutions and establish a solidarity fund for the victims.

To news organizations

1 – Acknowledge their duty of care for all their journalists, in particular news gatherers, staff or freelance and their responsibility to provide safety training equipment for dangerous situations in peacetime as in war.

2 – Arrange trauma counseling through specialized organizations.

3 – Negotiate at all time journalists and their representatives all issues of safety in news coverage, including safety protocols, medical care, life insurance, financial compensation, equality to provide those social guarantees to all, including freelancers.

4 – Increase awareness and knowledge of legal international agreements and conventions as well as regional ones.

5 – Include awareness of all aspects of the region under coverage in any training.

6 – Include special training for women in view of the attacks such as sexual harassment and the spate of other violent attacks directly targeted at women.

To Journalists

1 – Develop of culture of being responsible for their own safety and seek out training before travelling to conflict zones.

2 - Develop a culture of solidarity, in particular a duty of care towards each other.

3 – Be ready at all time to help record any incidents of attacks to provide evidence to cases of violence.

4 – Develop an understanding of how the military works and be ready how to handle them.

Follow up to these Recommendations

As a first step, the participants to the Doha conference agree to:

1- Place the issue of the safety and protection of journalists whenever possible on the agenda of international and regional institutions and conferences.

2-Work towards a new meeting to be attended by all stakeholders including governments to further discuss and develop the current recommendations after one year.

3- Agree to disseminate the current recommendations and to organize press conferences to publicize them.

4- Call upon the Qatari NCHR to create a working group involving all stakeholders to follow up the adopted recommendations.

Participants agree to transmit these recommendations to the President of the General Assembly for adoption by the General Assembly. This would be done by a presentation made by a delegation led by the NCHR and comprising International Federation of Journalists, The Press Emblem Campaign, Federacion de periodistas de America Latina y Caribe, Federation of African Journalists, Federation of the Arab Journalists, National Union of Journalists of the Philippines.

Participants recommend that all working papers of workshops are considered as official documents of the Doha international conference.

Finally, participants express their appreciation and thanks to the NCHR for its efforts organize the Doha conference and calls upon it to continue its work with other concerned parties to implement the adopted recommendations.